Drive your Arrow

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Drive your Arrow

by Anonymous

Summary

Hannibal's voice cut across Will's daydream. 'I would like to see you for lunch tomorrow. There is a proposition awaiting you.'

'What kind of proposition?'

'One that may keep you occupied for a while.' A proposition sounded like Lecter Bullshit wrapped up in the fake promise of a job. Which it wouldn't be, because the only two jobs that Will wanted back were the ones he was no longer employed to do.

Part 2 in 'Drawn to the Blood' - omegaverse/mob boss au

Notes

This could aptly be summarised as: Will has an existential crisis because he's not allowed to kill anyone on paternity leave.

Also I tried to change the tone up with this one, it def isn't as angsty…you're welcome lol

Also also, Anthony had like the briefest of cameos (no words spoken) in the first part, but I found a better role for him here so quietly changed the name in Drawn to the Blood. If you remember him in the first part…just pretend it was a different guy

I never post WIP's so this is mostly done and I'm just cleaning up the chapters before posting :)

Chapter 1

Will sat in the office chair, body sinking into warm leather with his feet kicked up onto the desk in front of him. He was feeling spiteful, which only made him dig his nails tighter into the soft leather padding either side of his hips. It had been a huge pain even getting into the office. Trying to sneak past security, getting caught. Having to show his status ID. It was newly updated since their rushed marriage. But it was enough to allow him access into Hannibal's office.

It had been nine months since that night in Verger's stables where he'd been forced to pick between his long-abandoned son and the baby growing in his stomach. Hannibal had saved the day, of course, and had relished in his supposed victory. Will had spent the three months after on forced bedrest in the hospital, their daughter arriving five weeks early. Ever since then, Will had found himself increasingly shut out from Hannibal's business ventures.

So now he was sitting in Hannibal's office in City Hall, the drawers to his locked desk prised open with one of his blades. There was nothing particularly interesting. His work diary, which after a brief look, housed only his council business and was therefore useless to Will. The pamphlets the audiologist had given them at the last appointment. A business card for a child's dressmaker; Hannibal was maybe a month away from matching their baby daughter to his pocket square.

He sat back when he heard footsteps outside the closed door, tilting his feet back up onto the polished desk just as the door swung open. He soaked up the scent of Hannibal as he walked through the door, not expecting the other man beside him. They both looked down at Will sitting in the chair, their words suddenly hushed. Hannibal's face would appear blank if Will didn't know him so well; if he couldn't read the slight raise of shocked eyebrows, the slither of a smile pinching at his lips. The rudeness of Will's appearance. He was uninvited into his place of work. His feet up on his desk.

'Will. What a surprise,' Hannibal said eventually, pulling himself up to his full height. He rounded the desk, loosening his suit jacket as he did so. 'I must introduce you to Anthony. He works in PR. A very important man to know. Anthony Dimmond, this is Will Graham.'

'The Will Graham? I've heard a great deal about you. Where's the little one?' The man looked around as if a stroller and a sleeping baby would spring up out of thin air.

'She's in daycare.'

'Franklyn, you mean?' Hannibal correctly, tapping the edge of Will's foot with two fingers until he pulled them from the desk and sat up straight in the chair, not taking his eyes from him.

'Yes, Franklyn. She's fine.'

'Of course she is.' Another pause. Will turned to look at the Anthony man. Handsome in a foppish way. A British accent and aura of pomp that had Will's fingers digging into the

leather of the chair again. Or maybe jealousy. It could be that too. He was omega, Will could smell it beneath the cheap cologne. It made the jealousy a little more irrational.

‘I’ll leave you both to it,’ Anthony said brightly. His hand dangled by Will’s face and he took it slowly. His hand felt engulfed by long fingers wrapping tight. As he departed the room, Will stood up and stepped away when Hannibal moved closer. He looked out of the window, settling into the pinching irateness that was clawing at his insides.

‘Did you find what you were looking for?’ Hannibal said, and Will finally turned to see him gently rolling the open drawer closed.

‘I wasn’t looking for anything in particular,’ he admitted. ‘I was bored.’

‘Of course.’ Hannibal sat down in his chair. Will watched him and then took a seat where his feet had been not long before, right in front of Hannibal. His fingers curled over the edge of the desk, short nails bumping heavy oak as Hannibal continued staring at him pleasantly. ‘And now you’re here to tell me off, I presume. What have I done this time?’

‘You can’t guess?’ Will could feel the spite building up again. Not that it had particularly settled. The rage that had him leaving his sleeping daughter with Franklyn and driving across the city mid-morning. This just added to it.

’From your mood alone, I presume this is regarding the dismissal of staff at the club.’

‘You didn’t tell me that staff were getting fired. I had Sarah in tears down the phone today. She said she received no warning and doesn’t understand why. She’s been in the job longer than I was.’

‘Unfortunately, I’m not in charge of staff turnover. That is the role of the interim manager. I didn’t tell you because I didn’t think it would concern you.’

‘Yes, you did. You’re just trying to piss me off. Get a reaction. Get me to open up.’

‘If you spent less time at Franklyn’s apartment, you wouldn’t focus so much on what was happening at the club and you could return to it eventually. When the time is right.’

‘When you decide the time is right?’

‘As the owner, yes.’

‘Be careful,’ Will reminded Hannibal, because what and who he owned was a very fine line. ‘Choose your words carefully, Hannibal.’

Hannibal’s smile widened with a flash of his teeth, ‘I always do.’

They had a house together. Or Hannibal had purchased a home for them when Will was in the hospital without telling him. It was quiet and sprawling; not too far from the city, but far enough away for Will to feel a sense of detachment. There was enough room for all of them,

including the dogs, and a separate entry and reception for Hannibal's *other* ventures. Will rarely stepped foot onto that side. On the occasions he had, the murmurings and chatter had grown so quiet he had felt so distinctly out of place that he'd been almost embarrassed. He'd just been grateful that what happened with Verger had stayed relatively hidden. His name hadn't been leaked, nor Gabe's. That was nearly all down to Hannibal.

Will still had his little house out in the woods, and he lived there sometimes when he needed his own space. When he craved the solitude. When Hannibal frustrated him. Their life together was still up in the air, waiting for the permanence of a bond. Married, because Will apparently lost his fucking mind not long after Greta was born and decided he wanted to get married there and then and Hannibal wouldn't miss the opportunity even if it meant a chapel wedding and no audience. There was the understanding that they would bond during Will's first heat after the birth, and so they lived in limbo, waiting for the moment to come.

He drove back to Franklyn's apartment after a vague promise to leave the club alone. Will stared at the venue as he parked up, remembering how even when everything in his life would seem impossible he could lock the door to his dark office, crawl into the space between the safe and his desk and feel nothing but the bass pulsating through the walls, rocking him into a sense of security.

Will wasn't obsessed, but he was curious. Curious to see how well the club was doing without him. He was technically unfired and on maternity leave, or at least that's what Hannibal had insisted whenever Will brought it up (which was becoming more and more regular). New management from outside. An alpha, of course, because he could do without the drama an omega would bring. He'd had enough of that with Will.

It had been his baby before his baby had come along. It had been the place where Hannibal let him have full control. Where Will was needed when he wasn't needed anywhere else. He allowed Will to hire and fire who he needed, only signing off on things that required an alpha's signature. In fact, unlike the restaurant he owned downtown, Hannibal rarely spent time at the club, didn't want to seem overbearing.

Of course, back then no one knew that they were fucking. Will was omega, but otherly, washed his scent away, didn't need placating. Most of the staff at the bar knew that Will had another role. Like cutting up men that betrayed Hannibal's trust, who stole his money or sold his secrets. Will with his knives and his gun occasionally. Mostly knives. Will was good with knives and even now, in his supposed serene state of early parenthood, he never left the house without at least two strapped to his body.

Greta's pink, chubby fists clapped together when he walked back into the apartment. He picked her up, inhaling her sweet scent as she brushed his jaw lightly with her bunched-up fist. He kissed her fingers. Every single one.

'You must have looked like this as a baby. She's just like you.' Will turned at Franklyn's comment. The man was sitting on his couch, looking slightly exhausted.

'I don't think my dad put me in as much pink.' Hannibal liked Greta in pink. Bought her sleep-suits and delicate dresses with matching tights. All stuff that was too fussy for Will's

tastes. Will just put her in stuff that washed well and washed together. But Hannibal had dressed her that morning so she appeared more like a fussy marshmallow than an actual baby.

She did look like him. Her hair was lighter, but what she had was curling up at the ends. The same flick of a nose, the same eye shape, same colour. She looked up at him with her toothless grin, and a flood of something warm rushed through his veins.

‘She’s making me broody,’ Franklyn said, as Will took a seat beside him on the couch. He remembered how he used to sit here last year, trying to find some peace from his world; how he had been the first person Will had told about the pregnancy, purely because he wouldn’t judge him for it.

‘You’re an alpha. You can go have a kid if you like.’

‘Oh no. I would be a terrible father,’ he said, and Will eyed him curiously. ‘But I enjoy looking after her.’

Will sat with Franklyn for a half hour, playing with Greta until she fell asleep in his lap. Afterward, Franklyn went back to typing at his computer and Will couldn’t resist the lure of the window and how it looked out at the back door of the club. He moved Greta to her stroller and gently switched her hearing aids off, kissing her smooth brow when she twitched.

Will’s eyes drew back to the window when he saw new movement outside the club. He walked over and looked out to see the back door fly open and two large men deposit another between them. It was too early for customers, which meant the man had presumably broken in, or found his way through their poor security system. That wouldn’t have been an issue under Will’s watch.

He was going to bite his tongue and turn away because he’d already argued with Hannibal about it once today, but then he’d seen that the third man was around seventeen years old and was wearing a familiar floral shirt; black and green with garish pink and blue flowers. He had about three in different colourways. Gabe.

‘I have to deal with something.’ Will said to Franklyn, half a second after he saw one man throw a punch at his son. ‘I’ll be back in five minutes.’

Franklyn made a humming sound in the back of his throat as if he didn’t quite hear, too absorbed in his work. Will tore out of the apartment and was flying across the street, darting out of the way of a car and listening to Gabe’s voice carrying out loudly.

‘… fucking runs this joint. You can’t fucking kick me out.’

‘What’s going on?’ Will said, out of breath as he tugged on Gabe until he was behind him. He was taller than Will now, and broader, but he was seventeen and an idiot. Will would do what he had to.

‘Listen sweetheart, we’re dealing with something here.’ The guard was an alpha, but Will didn’t recognise him. No alpha that worked at the club when he was there would even dare to

call him sweetheart. Will was not a sweetheart to anyone, he just about tolerated the *darling* that Hannibal had thrust upon him.

‘My name is Will Graham.’ Awareness fell over the man’s features like a switch being flicked on. Yeah, he knew who Will was. Probably knew who he was in relation to Hannibal, too. ‘You fucking touched my kid?’

‘He was trespassing.’ Hands raised in a sign of surrender, and Will realised he’d moved his own to peel the knife strapped beneath his shirt and was waving it in the air, in the middle of the day. He paused, and then tucked it away again, looking up to see that the man was staring at him with alarm. The other guy had retreated the moment Will had crossed the sidewalk. He was on his own.

‘I was looking for you,’ Gabe said from behind him, but that was bullshit because he knew Will wasn’t working there at the moment. Still. Will was bristling. Whether Gabe was wrong didn’t matter. No one touched him.

‘You don’t fucking touch my kid again. Do you hear me?’ Will said, waiting for the man to nod his head before he stepped back, holding tight to Gabe’s wrist, pulling him back across the road.

‘Dude, you’re crazy when you’re mad.’ Gabe sounded excited more than anything else, his voice cracking a little in the damp heat of the city.

‘I’m not crazy,’ he mumbled once they were back at Franklyn’s apartment. Will would have to buy the guy several bottles of his favourite wine for this, or raid Hannibal’s cellar. For not only putting up with Will and his baby daughter while he worked, but letting Will patch up his teenager with his bag of frozen peas.

‘You totally are,’ Gabe insisted.

‘I don’t like people touching my kids,’ Will said, with an awareness of when he’d first walked back into Gabe’s life all those months back. How he had broken down the door to find this terrified boy chained up like an animal. He pressed the makeshift icepack to Gabe’s eye, noticing a faded bruise on his jawline. He traced it with his thumb. ‘This isn’t from today.’

‘Dad said the last time he saw you that you punched him in the face,’ Gabe said in response, eyes drawing deliberately away from Will’s.

‘Your dad did this to you?’ Will hadn’t spoken to him, had the briefest of contact with his grandparents, who blamed Will entirely for what had happened on Verger’s farm and weren’t thrilled about Gabe’s insistence that Will was back in his life.

‘I got wasted on his wedding anniversary. Threw up in the pool and scared the little ones,’ Gabe shrugged. ‘I didn’t want to go. He knew that, but he still made me. So I caused a scene.’

‘He shouldn’t have touched you.’ Will could feel the anger burning inside again, first in his stomach until it rose higher. He took deep breaths, trying to rein it in.

‘Did you hit him because he got you pregnant?’ Gabe pressed.

Will still hadn’t told him exactly what had happened all those years ago. He felt stuck. Gabe had grown up wealthy, attended a private school, lived in a large house with his grandparents and visited his dad in his equally large home. Had all the things that Will would not have been able to give him. They had taken him from Will when he was too powerless to do anything about it, but they hadn’t hurt him. He was grateful and forever bitter. He hadn’t told Gabe the truth, because he didn’t want to sour the relationship, not when it was still so new between them.

‘You’re supposed to be starting school this week,’ Will said, delicately walking around the subject. He knew Gabe was starting school this week because he had put it on his calendar at home. One of his kids was a senior in high school, his other was barely eight months old. Gabe would be long out of college before Greta even made it to kindergarten. It horrified Will, if he was honest.

‘Can’t I come to school here?’

‘That’s not a decision I can make.’ Will bit his lip and then brushed his fingers over the thin red scar cutting through Gabe’s eyebrow. That had been his fault. Sometimes at night he still dreamt of the night in the stables, seeing the flash of brass knuckles slicing through Gabe’s temple. ‘You’ve only got a year left.’

‘I know.’ Gabe looked away, moving away from the pack of ice Will was forcing against his swollen skin. ‘I got a tattoo. That pissed dad off too. Do you want to see? My friend did it. His brother has a shop.’

Will didn’t have time to process the comment before Gabe’s hand was flying beneath his nose. Across the knuckles of his left hand was Greta’s name, the line work slight wonky, but stark as anything against his pale skin.

‘Your sister’s name?’ Will said, touched when he should probably be annoyed. That *would* piss his father off. Will had barely been back in the picture five minutes, and now their kid was permanently marking his body up.

‘I thought you’d like it.’ Gabe smiled wide and goofy, and Will couldn’t help but join in. The tattoo was awful and regrettable on a variety of levels, but Will didn’t berate him for it. Gabe was eighteen on his next birthday. He could do what he wanted.

By the time Will was driving back to Wolf Trap with his two kids in the car, guilt had built up inside. Things were different now, not just because he had no career and a husband he refused to live with full time. He listened as Gabe spoke at him, rapidly and all over the place, chiming in whenever necessary.

He tried calling Hannibal at his office but he wasn't around and so he called home, but one of the new alphas answered the phone and when Will asked where Hannibal was he was told to *'maybe feed that baby of yours and let him handle the important things.'* Will found himself stunned into laughter, wondered when exactly his status had overwhelmed everyone's goddamn respect for him. If that motherfucker had known him a year ago, he wouldn't have lasted the night with his knot intact.

Eventually, Hannibal called him back. Will was sitting in his empty living room, bereft of dogs even if their hair clumped in hard to clean places. Greta was warm in his lap, curled up against his chest and thirty seconds away from a deep sleep. In the distance, he could hear Gabe listening to his music in the guest room. He answered his phone softly, nudging it against his shoulder as Greta's breath deepened.

'Darling, I thought we'd agreed that you'd leave the club alone. Did you have a momentary lapse in judgement as the conversation was…less than four hours ago?' Hannibal was driving back from the office. Will could hear the familiar sounds of the city. Will was almost certain that Hannibal was *Up To Something.* Which furthered his frustration at being shut out.

'I know. I know,' Will said, because he didn't want to fight even when he wasn't the one in the wrong. 'Gabe showed up, and I got irrational again. They hit him and I lost it.'

'Is he there with you now?'

'Yeah. We're back in Wolf Trap. He wanted to come here.'

'I understand.' It was in the silence that Will sensed Hannibal's disappointment. He could feel it in his own bones. There was a level of uneasiness between the two alphas. Will's attention split between the both of them.

'You could come out here? I could cook for you, look after you here.' Will was trying because he knew he was an asshole most of the time and Hannibal was putting up with a lot of shit from him. Sometimes he just wanted to take care of him too, wanted to strip Hannibal out of his suit and treat him right, take him up to his nest and let their bodies sync up.

Hannibal's voice through the speaker cut through Will's daydream. 'That sounds nice, but I fear I will only cause friction. I shall be fine here alone. I would like to see you for lunch tomorrow. There is a proposition awaiting you.'

Will perked up. 'What kind of proposition?'

'One that may keep you occupied for a while.' A proposition sounded like Lecter Bullshit wrapped up in the fake promise of a job. Which it wouldn't be, because the only two jobs that Will wanted back were the ones he could not do. Yet the idea of a purpose outside of Hannibal's personal bedwarmer was intriguing.

'Okay, sure. Send me the details. I miss you. We miss you.' Will said it because *I miss you* was far easier than *I love you* which they had already said to each other, but Will wasn't in the habit of repeating. 'Greta fell asleep in that dress you put her in. She looks like a cupcake.'

‘Is she still wearing it? I would like a photo,’ Hannibal said. And then they said their goodbyes and Will felt the guilt eating him up inside once more.

Will cooked dinner between sending Hannibal the photo, feeding Greta and getting her ready for bed. Gabe sprawled himself over the couch that Will had bought a few months back. Now that he had a son who liked to lounge over furniture. Most of his furniture hadn’t made it to their new house. Wasn’t to Hannibal’s taste.

Will sat opposite Gabe as they ate, the baby monitor resting on the side. There was this warm feeling inside, content at feeding his son, at having his two children under one roof. A year ago the possibility was absurd. He hated it on one level, loathed the idea that he was falling to his biology, but the hazy pleasure he got was enough to simmer it down.

‘Are you okay?’ Will asked, after noticing how Gabe had been looking at him.

‘Can I call you mom?’

‘Uh.’ Will hesitated, fork dangling between his fingers as he thought it over. ‘Is that what you want to call me?’

Gabe shrugged and then gave a slight nod. There was a slight flush to his cheeks. ‘I already have a dad and he’s an asshole.’

‘I’m an asshole too, if we’re being honest.’

‘But you haven’t been to me. And I don’t… I’ve never had a mom.’

‘Neither have I,’ Will admitted. The word didn’t fit right, but then, nothing in life had ever really felt like it had fit him. ‘If that’s what you want to call me.’

The nightmares always came during the nights he slept alone. Always back in Verger’s stables with his face sticky with a dead man’s blood, his stomach heavy and his limbs tied down to the chair. The only difference was how he was forced to watch Gabe die, waking on the impact of Verger’s blade pressing into his stomach.

This time when he awoke, he noticed a shadow in the door. He rubbed at his eyes, face damp with sweat as he flicked on the light to see Gabe standing there awkwardly. Will patted the bed beside him, breathing in the warm scent of his son as he took up the space beside him. He tried to steady his breathing, focused on the shape of Greta asleep in the crib beside his bed.

‘I could…I could sense you were like…scared.’ Gabe admitted. ‘Is it because you’re my omega parent? It’s a thing, right? I’ve never been around one that’s made me feel like this.’

‘Sounds likely,’ Will said, taking a deep enough breath that the scent of his son filled his lungs. It was calming, as Hannibal’s was. ‘Sorry if I worried you. I get dreams sometimes. Nightmares about what happened last year if things had turned out differently.’

‘But it didn’t,’ Gabe said, easy going even in the middle of the night. He rolled onto his side; face buried into the pillow as Will gazed at him. ’Why do you want the club back so badly? Don’t you want more than to go back to being his employee?’

Will was both surprised at the comment and the insightfulness of his son, who had shown little previously. ‘It’s mine. Ever since I’ve known him, it’s always been mine.’

‘I just think that Hannibal would probably give you anything you wanted if you asked nicely.’

‘I don’t enjoy asking nicely,’ Will said, smiling when he felt Gabe’s body fall into a gentle laugh. They grew silent afterwards, and Will waited until he felt his son’s breathing even out into sleep before he tried joining him in it.

Will was up early the next morning, feeding a squealing Greta in her highchair, and stared gloomily at her as Gabe’s grandmother screamed down the phone at him. By the time he’d finished the conversation, it was under the assumption that they would fetch Gabe back tomorrow evening after they’d all had dinner together to *discuss things further*.

‘You guys hate each other. I’m not even allowed to mention your name,’ Gabe said, looking over at Will as he sat at the table and listened as Will explained the deal. ‘I don’t want to go back. Why can’t I stay here? Why can’t I go to school out here?’

‘I can’t make that decision.’ Will wished that he could, but he had very little say about anything. ‘I’m meeting Hannibal for lunch and then staying over. Need to see him for bonding stuff.’ Will waved his hand in the air, hoping that that was enough for Gabe to understand. Hoping he wouldn’t feel betrayed. ‘You can come too.’

‘No thanks.’ Gabe pulled the coffee mug towards him and took an easy sip. ‘I can stay here.’

‘Are you sure?’ Will didn’t even have a TV, and there was no takeout place that would deliver, but he had internet and he had frozen pizza. It was only a night.

‘No smoking in the house. Don’t break the generator. Don’t get into trouble that I can’t get out of,’ Gabe said it as if Will had ever nagged him.

‘Okay,’ Will said, because he hadn’t quite got to grips with the whole parenting a child that could fend for themselves thing. Greta, with her midnight feeds, teething, and screaming tantrums, was a lot easier to understand.

Hannibal wanted to meet at a French restaurant three blocks from City Hall. It was expensive, and felt a little dated, although Will wouldn’t say as much to Hannibal. By the look on the server’s face, he sensed it probably wasn’t the place to bring a kid either.

Anthony, the tall man with the scarf and the accent was sitting beside Hannibal at the small table at the back of the restaurant. Will hovered for a moment, curious and a little unnerved

about what the proposition would mean if it included Anthony. Hannibal rose and laid a hand on Will's shoulder, moving to unfasten Greta from the carrier strapped to Will's chest.

'Anthony?' Will frowned as he took a seat, hoping for some more information. He wouldn't be unnerved about Hannibal having lunch with another omega if it wasn't for the realisation that he hardly interacted with any outside of Will.

Anthony greeted him with another smirk and handshake across the table as another waitress placed a highchair beside Will. Hannibal looked at it momentarily before settling Greta into his arms instead. He looked kinda dumb in a way that made Will's chest ache; dumb for how spotless he looked with their fat little baby squirming in his lap, pink-faced from where she'd been snuggled against Will's chest.

'How is Gabriel?' Hannibal asked, looking blankly at Will as if he knew that Will would overreact and was hoping for it.

'Are you fucking each other?' Will asked, eyes only on Hannibal and trying to decide what exactly he would do if it was true. Will was absent, a terrible husband and almost-omega. Not warm enough, too angry about everything. Too messed in the head. 'Is that what this is about?'

'What an earth gave you that idea?' Anthony asked, laughing. 'Although now that I've met you twice, I wouldn't say no.'

Will stared at him for a beat and then turned to Hannibal, who had his lips pressed to Greta's mop of almost-curls. 'Are you making a pass at me?'

'Darling,' Hannibal interrupted. 'I ordered ahead for you. A bouillabaisse, like the one you've made for me.'

Will ignored him. 'We're both omegas. Is that—'

'I'm decidedly unfussy if that's what you're asking. Don't worry. I have no interest in stealing Hannibal away. Especially now I've met you. Exquisite.'

'I thought you were in PR? Why the hell are you talking to me like this?'

'He is a little abrasive,' Anthony said, turning to Hannibal this time. His face dropped to Greta, waving his long fingers at her until she giggled at him. She was already more sociable that Will had ever been. Will stared at the scene ahead of him and wondered what the hell he had walked into. 'Are you sure he's up to it?'

Will's fingers curled around the knife resting in front of him. Just to feel cool steel solid in his fist. Will had never particularly cared about being ignored, but he didn't appreciate being spoken over like a child by his husband and this smug stranger, who was cooing at Will's daughter.

'Will, relax,' Hannibal said, finally turning to him. He leaned over to stroke a finger over Will's clenched knuckles. The sensation was enough to have Will unfurling slightly, but he

just turned his gaze onto Hannibal.

‘What the hell are you playing at?’

‘There is a man I work with. A fellow councilman,’ Hannibal said, rolling his entire hand over Will’s until their fingers locked together. ‘Rude. disagreeable. We have fallen out on numerous occasions over numerous bills.’

‘Okay,’ Will said, unsure whether he should have known. Whether he should have asked. If he was honest, he hadn’t been a fan of Hannibal’s foray into small-time politics, and he tried to ignore it where possible. ‘But you find loads of people rude.’

‘He isn’t a good fit for the job.’ There was a pause as their food arrived. Hearty soups, too much for Will to stomach so early in the day. He held out his arms to Hannibal, and took Greta from him, knowing Hannibal was more than willing to enjoy the meal.

‘So are you here to back him up?’ Will said, turning to Anthony instead, who had been shoving a bread roll into his mouth and still looked far too good-humoured.

‘I agree. He’s also a bigot. A traditionalist in his beliefs. He supports bills that are frankly absurd. And he gets away with it too. He gets backing in part because he knows how to threaten those that would question him.’

‘And you have to deal with him because he’s a PR nightmare?’

‘Actually, no. He doesn’t deal with me. He refuses to work with omegas. We’re not fit for work.’ Will swallowed dry, looking between the two of them. ‘There're rumours about him. Nasty stuff with blackmail and photos, which is how he wins approval and votes. I think it would be in everyone’s best interest if he was no longer a working member of the board.’

‘He sounds like a dick, but no more of a dick than half the people in this city,’ Will pointed out, taking one mouthful of his stew and then wishing that he hadn’t. Too rich.

‘He will take an interest in you. He takes an interest in everything Hannibal does.’

‘And I’m something Hannibal does.’

‘Will, our relationship is unconventional. Why not use it to our advantage? Only yesterday you were complaining because you had no job anymore. I’m giving you the opportunity. There is a fundraiser at the City Hall this coming Friday. I would like for you to attend with me and get to know Emmett for me. Talk to him. Make him interested.’

‘Sounds like honey-trapping,’ Will said.

‘It *is* honey-trapping,’ Anthony agreed. ‘If you dial down the rudeness, I think you’d be excellent at it.’

‘So you want me to flirt with this councilman because he’s blackmailing people and also because you don’t want to work with him anymore? I’m not getting it.’

Hannibal paused, leaning over to tip a small mouthful of lukewarm soup into Greta's mouth. She turned her face away and coughed, and Will was bitter enough to silently revel in her dissatisfaction.

'More or less. I would like you to attend with me and talk with him. Anthony will be there to keep an eye. I need access to his office, to his computer. He needs to be suitably distracted while I do so.'

'I know a man in tech,' Anthony said. 'He's decrypted Emmett's password already. It's just a case of copying over the files.'

'Why do I have to be the bait?' he asked, looking at Anthony instead. Hannibal would only try to appease him with words that would leave him more frustrated. 'He doesn't like you, which means he won't like me by default. And you know I'm not charming.'

'I think you're charming,' Hannibal said. The corners of his eyes crinkled briefly when Will glanced over at him. 'And I want it to be personal.'

'What are we if not the ultimate possessions of our alphas?' Anthony interrupted, leaning forward as if it was all a joke.

'I don't belong to Hannibal. Not yet, at least.' His days were numbered in that regard and still he felt split down the middle; a mix of fear and relief about it finally happening. 'Why can't you do it?'

'He knows me. I am inconsequential to him.' Anthony's fingers curled around his wineglass, pouring it back as if it wasn't mid-afternoon. His words flowed without the bitterness that Will's would. 'You should see how he hates Hannibal. I've heard about the meetings, dealt with the press afterwards. If he were to meet you, seduce you, and then find out Hannibal played him after all? That would be excellent.'

'How will he know that I'm not playing him?'

'Because you are the most manipulating person I know,' Hannibal said. 'And you will do a good job for me.'

'Will Emmett be dismissed? Will there be an opening on the board like there was for you? For someone that aligns themselves with you?'

There was that glint in Hannibal's eye that had Will's breath catching. It felt like old times, hidden away in Hannibal's private office as they discussed all those that stood in their way. 'You're starting to see.'

What Will saw was an opportunity to get his old job back at the club. He wanted to do what he was good at; he wanted to protect Hannibal in the ways he had previously, harming those that dared try to harm him. He had no interest in being dressed up like a prized ham and dangled under the nose of a bigot until he bit. Will had become a biter of late, particularly to those that tried to threaten him. But he would do what was needed.

‘I’ll think about it,’ he said, refusing to look either one of them in the eye.

It was late, and they were both in the new house. Will was in Hannibal’s study, fingers tracing the spines of familiar books, some well-worn, but others bought clearly for how well they looked stacked in a floor to ceiling bookcase. If Will closed his eyes he could almost imagine that they were a year back, in his old house, hidden in his little office behind the locked suite where no one else had access.

‘I know what you were doing with Anthony today.’

Hannibal was sitting in his armchair, one hand cupped around his wineglass. Will could feel his eyes burning into the back of his head. Will turned to face him, raising his brow when Hannibal refused to comment.

‘You were trying to make me jealous.’

‘You thought we were having an affair.’

‘Not once I thought about it. I know that I’m not a very good husband, but I also know that you’d find it crass to have an affair with someone that works in PR.’ Will pressed himself against the bookcase and gazed down at Hannibal across the room, a small smirk curling the corners of his lips upwards. His eyes shone in the darkness.

‘Excellent analysis, Will,’ Hannibal said, taking a sip of his drink before placing it onto the small table beside him. ‘You’re correct that I invited Anthony along in part because I knew that it would make you uncomfortable and I was curious to see your reaction. Also, so you would take my request seriously and not just see it as grandstanding.’

‘I think if you want me to do this then I should get something that I want in return.’

‘What is it you have in mind?’ Hannibal smiled at him, his eyebrows raising as Will approached, bending one knee to slide between Hannibal’s legs, his hand splayed in the middle of his chest. Will’s fingers caught on rich silk, on the light cotton of his waistcoat as his other hand curled to his nape, touching heated skin.

‘I want the club back.’ He pushed his hand further into Hannibal’s chest until he could feel the slow rhythm of his heartbeat. When he looked at him, Hannibal was smiling, face tilted just slightly. His fingers slowly curled around Will’s wrist with enough ease that his thumb trapped his own middle finger.

‘I never planned on removing you full time, but I think you should pick something else,’ Hannibal said, his warm fingers wrapping tight around Will’s. His other arm moved to Will’s waist, drawing him in until he was fully seated over his lap. ‘You’ve always responded wonderfully to a well-designed incentive.’

‘Like a dog?’ Will didn’t wait for any confirmation on that point and settled his weight down over Hannibal. He remembered Gabe’s comment from the night before; *Hannibal would give*

you anything you wanted. ‘I want in on the business. I want to know who and how you’re trading. What’s coming and going. And I want a vacation. With all the kids. Somewhere with water.’

‘I would give you the second without hesitation.’

‘If you see me as an equal, give me the first. I have a brain. You should let me use it. I’m smarter than all of those alphas you guard yourself with. Let me in and maybe I’ll do a good job.’ Will rolled his hips down, felt Hannibal’s hands burning through his shirt, smelled his scent. All it did was make Will even more certain.

‘If you behave yourself with Emmett, I will consider it.’

‘And if I behave myself now?’ Will said, sliding his hand down Hannibal’s body, over his suit of muted plaid, fingers curling into the fold hiding his fly. ‘Will you raise the stakes?’

‘Perhaps I could be persuaded.’

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Thank you for the comments & kudos :)

‘Where will you bite me?’ Will asked later, when they were in bed and refitting themselves to each other. His shoulders were sore and swollen where Hannibal’s teeth had sunk so deep they pierced skin. They were working up to the mating bite, so he would be used to the sensation once his heat came. Will had discovered that he enjoyed the stinging sensation of a bite, how in that moment he felt owned, like his damaged mind wasn’t his own, but something that Hannibal had to look after instead.

‘The gland over the side of your neck.’

‘Very traditional,’ Will hummed, rolling his hips back when Hannibal traced a path up the hollow of his throat, shuddering at the scrape of his nails against sensitive skin. ‘Can I bite you back?’

‘How unlike you to ask.’ A laugh, and the sharp sting of teeth sinking into muscle. It ached, but in a way that had Will unspooling. He could feel his body finally softening from the rigidness of the last few days. ‘Your possessive nature is always enjoyable.’

Sex was always good with Hannibal. He could bring Will off with his tongue and his fingers, could be possessive but receptive when Will wanted a little more dominance. Often Will found Hannibal at his most trusting when they were in bed, bodies bared and connected with no thoughts for anything else. Teeth, tongues, lips and sweat. Nothing but honesty.

‘You never laugh when I lose myself during sex. When the omega-ness comes out,’ Will pointed out afterward. He felt sore between his legs, slick and come pooling onto the sheets below. His mind, though, felt entirely sated. Calmed in that omega way. It made his tongue a little looser, like he’d lost his mind to three glasses of wine on an empty stomach.

Hannibal made a disagreeable noise that rumbled low in his chest. ‘There’s no such things as omega traits, Will. Just preferences.’

‘Then I like how you don’t judge me for liking it when you get a little possessive.’

‘Hmmm.’

‘He wouldn’t let you, you know.’

‘Who wouldn’t?’ Will rolled over, groaning at the dull ache as he nuzzled his damp cheek over the expanse of fuzz over Hannibal’s broad chest. He had a lot of chest, enough for Will

to curl up against. A beast beneath the well-tailored suits.

‘Anthony. He wouldn’t let you fuck him in the ass, you know? I let you do that sometimes, but he wouldn’t.’

‘Must we talk of Anthony now?’

‘I don’t like that you’re working with another omega. I don’t want to be replaced. I’ll kill you if you try to replace me. Or I’ll leave with Greta. I’m not just possessive in bed, but I won’t fight for you like that.’

‘Try to tamper the beast down a little, Will.’ He was trying to chide, but Will could hear the lightness in his voice. Hannibal had made no secret of the idea that he enjoyed Will’s jealous streak. ‘You need to get some sleep.’

The next morning Will remembered what he had said and refused to be embarrassed by it. It was just his hormones jerking him around. Hannibal hadn’t ever shown much interest in other omegas. There was nothing to be jealous about.

Will told Hannibal about Gabe’s new tattoo and committed Hannibal’s horrified expression to memory. It was so rare to get something so completely unsubtle from him. Will sat at complete ease, drinking coffee and watching Hannibal scoop oatmeal into Greta’s mouth. Will usually let her go to town; fingers instead of a spoon, most around her face and in her hair. Hannibal was a lot more careful.

‘When I left the hospital after I had Gabe I kept leaking everywhere. No baby to feed. They gave me this stuff to dry it up.’ Will hadn’t meant to say it aloud. It still hurt in a simmering way, where the loss was still so palpable. Softened a little in how Gabe was now in his life, but he missed out on so much, and every milestone of Greta’s reminded him so. ‘I don’t know why I said that.’

Hannibal eyed him over the table, face blank apart from the warmth of his eyes and the hint of a smile on his lips. ‘You’ve become a parent for the second time, but you’re experiencing so much as if it’s new. It’s unsurprising that it brings up memories you kept hidden for so long.’

Will wondered briefly how much of parenting Greta reminded Hannibal of Mischa. He didn’t ask. Hannibal was unpredictable when discussing his dead sister. Will didn’t want to upset the balance.

‘Does it bother you I had someone else’s kid?’ Will changed the subject so that he wouldn’t bring Mischa up, and partly because he’d seen the delicate rift between Gabe and Hannibal come close to spilling over. Last time they had both been in the room together Hannibal had drifted into his usual pretension and Gabe had told him to *fuck off grandad.* They made a habit of ignoring each other now.

‘If I was to think irrationally, then yes. I’d have liked to have been the only man to ever put a baby in you.’ A slither of something hot twisted around Will’s spine at the comment. Made him shift in his chair. The possessiveness that he recoiled from ordinarily was even more exciting on the rare occasions it came so acutely. If Will was beta, or another alpha, he’s certain Hannibal would feel the same, biology be damned.

‘But when you think rationally?’

‘We cannot change the past. You were a boy who made one poor decision. I’m not blameless in how your most recent pregnancy arose. I would like for our next child to have a more welcoming start.’

‘Our *next* child?’ Will cringed even when Hannibal looked toward him with a perfectly straight face.

‘Now that I have seen quite how perfect we can make them I see no harm in trying for another.’

Will laughed, half through uneasiness, half contemplatively. His nails bounced on the table as he organised his thoughts. ‘I do like the idea of another one. But I don’t know if it’s just the idea of planning to have a kid rather than just…having one because I make poor choices in contraception.’

‘Not poor,’ Hannibal said. Will knew he was trying to catch his eye, but he couldn’t. It was too early in the morning for such heart to hearts.

‘Gabe’s grandparents are flying in today to take him back to school. They want to talk to me. I booked a restaurant. Can you come? I know I’m only going to say something I regret otherwise.’ Hannibal seemed pleased at the request, sitting broader in his chair as Greta slammed a hand into the bowl of oatmeal with a delightful giggle, splattering Will and somehow avoiding Hannibal and his exquisite suit.

‘Of course. We will handle it together.’ Hannibal took a deliberate step away from their daughter, aware that he wouldn’t be staying stain free if he sat beside her any longer. Will wiped at her cheeks with a napkin, half a curious-eye on Hannibal floating around the room as he often did, moving his coffee cup into the kitchen before he came back into sight and asked Will for details about the meeting.

Will told him the time and the place, and only rolled his eyes slightly when Hannibal complained about the standards of the restaurant. He resisted Hannibal changing the booking to his own restaurant, mainly because that would involve contacting Gabe’s grandparents again and he couldn’t deal with that.

Hannibal bent to kiss him softly and then moved to stroke the gentle curls folding over Greta’s scalp, placing two soft kisses on her sticky cheeks as he left for work a few minutes later. Will felt something akin to a physical *yearn* as the door closed and then hated how it made him feel. He used to be the one leaving, sneaking out before the men arrived for the day. Purposeful.

Will's house smelled like weed and stale teenager when he got back mid-morning, but it was mostly a relief that Gabe hadn't entirely trashed the place. Will threw all the windows open, glad that it was a sunny day and warm with it too. At that point, Gabe rounded the corner, hair damp from his shower, and made a half-hearted attempt to clean up the plates that had collected in the half a day he had been left alone. Will followed him through, noticing an old box on the table.

'I found it in the barn out back. Is this my grandad?' The box was one of three that Will had salvaged after his dad's death. His father had always travelled light and Will only took what he thought he should; old photos, fishing gear that he couldn't bear to mingle with his own.

Will hadn't bothered looking through it. His grief was spiked with regret at every angle. All the things that remained unspoken between them. There had been a gap in affection that had lingered, and Will had never truly forgiven him. He was almost certain his dad hadn't forgiven him either.

'Yeah, that's me and him.' Will noticed a stack of faded photos. This one had been in a frame by the side of his father's bed wherever they moved. He stood beside his father, small and in clothes he had never really grown into, aged nine or ten.

'Were you close?'

'No,' Will said, and watched the way Gabe frowned briefly. 'Not because of you. I think it would have just been easier if I was beta. None of the mess that comes with omegas, or alphas. I don't think he really wanted me, but my mom left first so he was stuck.'

Gabe took it all in with a soft frown and a gentle nod, his fingers nudging through the old photos. Will eyed the wobbly lines of his new tattoo, hitching Greta higher in his arms. 'When did he die?'

'Ten years ago. Cancer. It took him quick.'

'Was he a good dad?'

'He tried. He did what he thought was the right thing, even if it didn't feel like it.'

'Did he make you give me up?' Gabe asked, but Will shook his head. Greta fussed in his arms and he shushed her, a hand cupped behind her head as he refused to meet his son's eyes.

'It's complicated. Can you clean this away?' Gabe must've read the discomfort in Will's voice because he nodded silently and muttered an apology, even when Will squeezed his shoulder.

Will had arranged a sitter for Greta, someone he had used previously that he hadn't grown to hate. It was only for a few hours, but already on the drive back into the city he felt aimless as Gabe fiddled with the radio. 'I can't do anything about where you live. But if your dad touches you again, you tell me and I'll make sure he never lays a hand on you again.'

‘You’re way more terrifying than he could ever be. You ripped that guy’s throat out when he put you in a heat, right? And those guys on that psycho’s farm. Sometimes I close my eyes and I remember how fucked up you looked. Fuck. It was *amazing.’*

It wasn’t right, Will knew, to have his kid look upon his violent tendencies with such appreciation, but he couldn’t help but smile at him.

Five minutes into the dinner and wedged between Gabe and Hannibal, Will had the sense that there was little reason for him to be there at all. He was omega, married but not bonded to one of the richest men in Baltimore and the supposed ruiner of their son’s life all those years back. They stared at his throat, and Will wished he had let Hannibal sink his teeth in the night before, as if legitimising their relationship would somehow grant their approval.

The conversation was stilted, and then when it wasn’t, it was nearly always directed toward Hannibal. Gabe was sullen beside him, fidgeting whenever his grandmother said something to try and rankle Will’s sharp tongue. He only behaved himself because he didn’t want to fuck things up further for his kid. Once the food was served, talk turned directly to Gabe’s schooling. Will pushed his food around his plate, as the conversation was directed toward Hannibal once more.

‘The boy needs to be with his father, I’m sure that you understand, Hannibal. And he is at the best school possible. He needs to stay with us and not follow…any whims. This has all been very new, but he needs stability.’

‘I think this is a conversation that I should support from the outside,’ Hannibal said, which was as diplomatic as he got. More diplomatic than what Will would like. But then he didn’t want Hannibal fighting his battles for him either. ‘I wouldn’t discourage the two from spending time together.’

‘Maybe we could work out a schedule or something,’ Will tried, looking at Gabe, who was flitting between staring gloomily down at his plate, or with interest at the pretty waitress that kept passing the table. ‘You could come and stay with us for weekends. Spring break?’

‘Gabriel stays with his father during spring break,’ Joan said, cutting in. Will looked at her and only bit back his words when he felt Hannibal’s wide palm rest on his knee beneath the table.

‘I don’t want to stay with my dad,’ Gabe said. ‘He doesn’t want me there and I don’t want to be there.’

‘That isn’t true.’ His grandfather finally spoke up. The flashbacks of sitting in their formal house, listening to them discuss what would and wouldn’t be happening back when he was fifteen flickered through his mind. It itched at his skin and he looked away. ‘I want to stay with Will. I’ll only run away again if you stop me.’

‘You will stay with your father during spring break,’ his grandfather said. His tone made it obvious he was to be obeyed. ‘You can stay with Will during the Christmas holidays. If that suits.’

‘Abigail will be back then,’ Will mumbled to Gabe. They could all go to Hannibal’s lake house. The sudden desire for it warmed his chest, and he felt Hannibal’s hand squeezing lightly again as if he sensed Will’s reaction too.

‘Christmas and some weekends?’ Gabe begged, looking to his grandfather, who had somewhat of a less soured expression on his face than his wife.

At one point, once coffee had been served and Gabe had disappeared to the restroom, at the same time as the waitress took a break, and Hannibal had gone to pay his compliments to the chef, Will found himself alone at the table with the two of them. Dislike now palpable between them.

‘You have done well for yourself, Will,’ she said, eyes down on the wedding ring nudged onto his finger and then his bare throat.

‘What does that mean?’

‘Always were an ambitious boy. That much was obvious in your behaviour toward our son, but attaching yourself to a man like Hannibal. It would thrill your father. He always had high…hopes for you.’

‘I’ve been good,’ Will said. ‘You took him from me. He doesn’t know that. Do you want me to tell him because I can see that going down *really* well.’

Her mouth opened in response, as his fingers curled over the knife in his lap. ‘Your daughter needs you, Will. Perhaps you should focus on that rather than involving yourself in Gabriel’s life. He needs stability and guidance. Are those things you really think you can provide?’

‘He’s asking questions. I’m happy to answer them, but I don’t think he’s going to like what I have to tell him.’

‘Your father sold your child, not us.’

‘His dad hit him. If you’re going to judge my father’s decisions, maybe look at your son’s.’ There was an uneasy pause, and Will noticed a sudden shadow over the table. Hannibal was looking at him with that clear stare of his, dark eyes shining in his smooth face.

‘Gabriel has made a friend of a pretty young lady. I’d give him a few minutes,’ Hannibal said lightly, his hand pressing onto Will’s shoulder. His eyes darted to the couple opposite, still staring at Will with pinched and furious faces. ‘I have taken care of the bill. Thank you for joining us.’

‘You didn’t have to do that. You didn’t have to pay. They should have paid.’ Will had absorbed the nasty atmosphere and swallowed it down on the drive back to Wolf Trap. His fingers bunched into fists in his lap, nails biting down into his palms. Gabe had left with his grandparents and Will had left his car parked outside the restaurant as Hannibal drove them back to his little house in the woods.

‘I failed to see a scenario in which the evening could have gone well, if we’re being honest.’ Hannibal’s eyes were on the road, but Will turned to look at him all the same. ‘I’m sure you feel the same in that regard.’

‘They act like they did me a favour when all they did was steal from me.’

‘They belittled you and your father. They used your status and the fact that we’re not bonded to discredit you, and they brought up our daughter’s impairment to pull apart your ability to bear me a perfect child, as if I would consider her less. You deserve to come away angry.’

‘I wanted to kill her for that. I’m a good father. I wouldn’t lay a hand on any of my kids. Which is more than what I could say about their son. I want them dead but I don’t because they’re Gabe’s guardians and that would make me no better than them. I still want them dead. I don’t care.’

‘If he is violent with his son, then I would say that you have every right to be angry,’ Hannibal said, his eyes finally meeting Will’s as they paused, caught in late-night traffic. ‘But what are you going to do about it, Will?’

‘I don’t know.’

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Will knew that fitting the hearing aids to Greta’s ears each morning should’ve been depressing. He was almost certain about that. A product of his own failings once more. They didn’t know *what* had caused her hearing loss, but he was willing to take the blame. Still, fitting the aids into her tiny ears and watching her face light up as he spoke to her, made every day an actual blessing before he’d even had his first cup of coffee.

Hannibal looked put together enough, dressed in one of the suits he had taken to leaving at Will’s almost-empty house. He looked wildly out of place, even more so with their daughter propped up in his lap. They were too familiar with each other now for Will to feel too much embarrassment at the starkness of his house, strewn with half-filled boxes, but it lacked the grandiosity that followed Hannibal everywhere otherwise.

‘Who runs things for you now? You must have someone monitoring everything,’ Will asked, trying not to sound too curious. Too desperate.

‘Tier has been overseeing the general management of the business. Anything more particular goes through the lawyers who I talk with once a day. I still sign off on anything important.’

‘Tier’s just a kid.’

‘He works well beneath my orders. I’ve worked close with the boy for years. This is a chance for him to step up.’

‘I would work better.’

‘As my partner I would expect more of you. I’m having to decline several social gatherings as I can’t find time to accommodate them as well as my responsibilities as a councilman.

Right now, no one attends on my behalf, but I would have you go.'

'That's not where my skill set lies, Hannibal. You're not sending Tier to dinner parties in your place.'

Will had never been social. He attended the absolute minimum of Hannibal's gatherings prior to their marriage. Ate at his table when obliged but held on mostly as a support for Abigail. He couldn't work a room, and he didn't know how to be charming. He had seen Hannibal do it frequently; pull up to full height and spout absolute bullshit to a flock of people that *always* ate it right up.

'It would just be the start. I'd move over more responsibility to you after a while.' He was being placated. He could see it in the way Hannibal was staring at him, how he used gentle words. Will wasn't an idiot, but he was also learning how and when to pick his battles.

'I guess coming to this fundraiser with you is good practice,' Will said, eyes drawn down to Greta and then up at Hannibal again. 'Maybe I'll learn some manners.'

'I fear you won't have to do much to sway Emmett's opinion of you. Your scent right now is very alluring.'

'Okay.' Will flushed but tried to ignore the compliment. 'I don't see how your plan will work. If he's a traditionalist, then why would he be interested in me? I'm in my mid-thirties. I have two kids by two different men, neither of who I'm bonded to. Guys like that like virgins. Young ones.'

'But you're mine. It is the same as with Mason.' Will hated that he flinched at the name, hated that Hannibal noticed and softened his gaze. 'I mean to say that powerful men like to take things they believe belong to another. That you're unconventional will be both amusing and alluring to Emmett. I think you will enjoy it. Manipulation is not a foreign concept for you.'

Hannibal's hands brushed just lightly over Greta's gentle scalp, bouncing her lightly on one slim knee. Their eyes caught and Will relived for a moment, the time in which he planned to keep her as truly his own, to stop Hannibal from ever becoming involved.

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Will hadn't worn a decent suit in what felt like forever. Bedrest had landed him in sweatpants and pyjamas for the three months he was hospitalised. He was back in his dependable flannels the moment they released him and hadn't really changed out of them since. He'd dressed as smart as he could when Gabe's grandparents had visited, but that was nothing like what he'd dressed as previously.

They were back in *their* house a few hours before the fundraiser. Hannibal had ordered Will a new suit, a rich dark blue. He let Hannibal shower with him and allowed him to watch as he fed their daughter. Afterward, he pulled Will into a silk navy shirt, trousers that felt just tight enough to feel a little snug. No cufflinks. Will never wore them. Will had been wearing his wedding ring, but Hannibal pulled it from his finger in a gentle caress, feeding it onto a silver

chain that he hung from Will's neck. His wedding ring now sat at the base of his throat; white gold warmed by his own body heat.

'Why?' Will asked, rolling back the French cuffs of Hannibal's shirt until the holes matched. In his fingers were the delicate cufflinks Hannibal had picked for the night, not dissimilar in colour to Will's shirt.

'He will look at your bare throat and see your commitment to me. It will excite him.'

'It isn't just for tonight, is it? You want me to do this for a while?'

'I would like to see him burned by your own hands, Will. This will give you the perfect opportunity.'

'Alphas are fucking weird,' Will said, not turning away when Hannibal pressed a kiss to the corner of his mouth. He fixed the cufflinks in place, skirting his fingers over Hannibal's for a few moments. Between their breaths and beating hearts he could feel the gentle strength of their bond pulsating between them, not quite fixed but almost. He closed his eyes and laid his head briefly against Hannibal's jaw, breathing in his scent.

'It's been over a year, you know? Since Cordell. Matthew. You and me on the kitchen floor.' They were sitting in traffic as Will spoke, as he tried to distract himself from how his stomach was a knotted mass of nerves.

Will knew that he looked good. He'd never bothered with his appearance, but with the effort and length Hannibal had gone to, he knew it polished him up into something that would have people glancing his way. His glasses were on the nightstand at home, and he'd pushed Will's hair back so that it fell in a soft wave to the side of his head. Will could pretend it was a year ago, when he did this to fit Hannibal's aesthetic, but really he felt more like arm candy than armed protection.

Hannibal's throat made a sound of rumbled content. He too looked striking, but then his penchant for a bold print always left him that way. Even now, as an established councilman, he hadn't toned it down. A black pinstriped suit; merlot red shirt and a similarly coloured tie to match. His hair was slicked down, almost glossy, and it picked out the sharp angles of his face.

'Things are very different to how they were back then.'

'Yeah.'

'Not that I would change a thing.' Hannibal wasn't looking at Will, but into the tinted window as they peeled through the evening traffic. Will tried to smooth his face free of muscles bunched taut, tried to seek Hannibal's reflection in the window, but it was too distorted to make sense of.

Before they exited the car, Hannibal grabbed Will's wrist, pushing the fabric until he bared the pale underside. He rolled his tongue over the sensitive flesh, sucking gently. Biting down until Will yanked it from his grasp.

‘Are you scent-marking me?’ Will asked, wiping the spit on his knee before pulling his jacket down. They didn’t fucking do that. Hannibal’s possessiveness was only worthwhile to him in the bedroom. Not as an archaic ritual to see off other suitors. ‘Don’t fucking do that.’

‘We are both playing a part tonight, Will,’ Hannibal said, ignoring Will’s complaint. ‘Come now.’

Will was used to Hannibal attending galas in museums, at the opera house, on a yacht. He figured the inside of City Hall wasn’t *that* different. Marble floors, enormous staircases; stone and gold. Gaudy. People were mingling all over the place like an infestation of perfumed ants; all cocktail dresses and black tie. Wealth oozing from every inch. They moved past smaller, more intimate rooms and Will saw more of society rubbing shoulders, hands clutching around flutes and tumblers of liquor, the white blazers of the staff flitting around between them.

Will kept a vague smile on his face every time he was introduced to someone new. Hannibal made everyone curious, always had. Foreign; exotic by their standards. A year ago, when this was not their life and Will was known more for being Hannibal’s bloodhound, there was no way in *hell* he’d get himself caught up in a scheme like this. Now he was what? A demure omega that Hannibal had knocked up and married with no one knowing. It set Will’s teeth on edge.

Anthony showed up in a bluster, but Will was grateful for a familiar face even if he loathed whatever would spill from his pompous mouth. In the end, it was the compliments that Will could tolerate and an eye-fucking that he didn’t.

‘Emmett’s going to love you,’ Anthony said, hands gripping Will’s shoulders in a tight squeeze before stepping back. ‘Or not. Hopefully you’ll behave.’

‘Don’t fucking talk to me like that,’ Will said, with little heat and a small smile. Anthony was almost infectious in his enthusiasm. Will was fascinated both in how at odds and how at peace he was with his status.

When Anthony disappeared under the guise of *work,* Will was guided once more toward people that Hannibal worked with. A mingling of scents and perfumes and money. It made his head ache. He wanted to be in Wolf Trap with his dogs and his kids. Maybe Hannibal, if he behaved.

‘How lucky we are to finally meet you, Will,’ The goddamn mayor said. The *mayor.* Will smiled politely but couldn’t think of anything he should say. This was a job, and he was playing a part. He just smiled tight-lipped and looked down at their feet. It was probably expected, he figured. At a function like this.

‘Is that the job you’re after next?’ Will asked, half curious when Hannibal pulled him away. Two glasses of champagne glided towards them on a platter waved beneath their noses, but Will declined the flute. He wouldn’t be able to focus with the alcohol.

‘I’m quite settled as I am, but you can never start looking toward the future too early.’

‘We’ll have to start saving for Greta’s college fund soon,’ Will agreed, allowing himself to smile when Hannibal laughed beside him. His breath bloomed across Will’s ear and he had to force himself not to bare his neck in public.

‘Quite right. Now, I’m going to need access to Emmett’s office. I need you to keep him busy while I do so. Shall I introduce you?’ Will’s response didn’t matter because Hannibal was already guiding him up to the second rotunda where a broad chested man was nursing a whiskey alone, watching the function below with lazy eyes.

Emmett looked exactly how Will had imagined him to look. Hair receding and a little too black to be natural, a thick padding to his stomach and a suit made of polyester. He wasn’t particularly ugly, but nor was he anything other than another middle-aged alpha that hadn’t the good sense to look after himself.

Hannibal introduced them both, his thumb riding the side of Will’s neck in an uncharacteristic show of public possession. Will forced himself to relax, to smile politely until Hannibal was called over by Anthony, who looked to Will with amused eyes. Will held out a hand, the wrist where Hannibal had scent-marked him upturned and open. Emmett would be able to smell the ownership. If the wedding ring that dangled from the open collar of his shirt wasn’t obvious.

‘Look after him for me, won’t you,’ Hannibal said just before he left them. Will wasn’t entirely sure who the comment was aimed at.

‘Nice to meet you,’ Will said, refusing to play demure enough to look away. He wouldn’t submit himself to that level, not even for Hannibal. He kept his grip light and vague, clammy fingers sliding against his own.

‘Can I have some?’ Will asked, nudging his head toward the glass of whiskey in his hand. ‘Just a sip.’

‘What would Hannibal Lecter have to say about me getting his omega drunk?’

‘A sip does not equate to a lack of sobriety,’ Will said in a voice that sounded nothing at all like Hannibal, but Emmett’s smirk lifted at the corners of his lips all the same. His teeth were white and so straight they looked like dentures. ‘I’m currently capping my limit, if you understand.’

Will didn’t look away, not even when Emmett’s eyes lowered to the open collar of Will’s shirt, then lower over his chest. A traditionalist. Probably didn’t think someone like Will should be out of the nest until the kid was weaned completely. Probably not till Greta was five.

‘A daughter, yes?’

‘Yes.’ Will swallowed, smiling blandly. ‘Eight months.’

‘What’s her status?’

‘Healthy.’ Will kept his face neutral even as Emmet let loose a breezy laugh. Will held out a hand again. Will had never been an omega to depend what would be considered his fairer attributes, but for distraction purposes, for what Hannibal needed tonight, he was willing.

Emmett handed the whiskey over and Will took a sip, looking up at Emmett through lowered lashes. Too on the nose. Too on the nose for Hannibal at least, who liked the roughness of Will, the jagged edges, the man who could only be petted and calmed behind closed doors. Emmett’s eyes darkened at the submissive look. So easily caught. Will barely dampened his lips with the alcohol, but he licked it away as he handed the glass back.

‘Why haven’t you let him put those teeth into that pretty neck yet?’

‘You work with Hannibal, no? Then you know he is not a man of convention.’ Will looked over his own shoulder. Half in a fake show of nerves, half to see if Hannibal was in sight. He couldn’t see him. That was good, it meant he was doing whatever the fuck it was he needed to be doing.

‘And are you a man of convention?’ Emmett asked. His eyes were greedy on Will. Hannibal had been right. Looking at Will was a way for Emmett to see Hannibal in a different light.

‘I’m just a man,’ Will said, laughing gently and looking down when he noticed the deepening stare. Will didn’t enjoy being stared at, certainly not by an alpha, but unmated his body was warming up in his presence. He was good at keeping it at bay, but he could feel it.

‘You need a cigarette,’ Will said, because he knew the twitchy signs from Gabe; had noticed the nicotine stains on Emmett’s fingers when he had handed over the drink. No wedding ring either, although that didn’t mean he was unmated. ‘Shall we go outside?’

Outside meant far away from Hannibal and whatever he was doing up in Emmett’s office. A smoke and a flirt. Will could deal with that; he had killed enough grown men to make it look like an accident if he needed to. Not that he would, but he wasn’t as sold on his honey-trapping skills as Hannibal was.

‘Surely you don’t smoke,’ Emmett said when they were outside. Will lit his cigarette for him, their heads bowed together, his hand cupped over the flame as it caught the tip. He handed it over, smiling before he looked down again.

‘My son does. I recognise the signs.’

There was a pause, as if the comment surprised Emmett. ‘You have a son? Hannibal hasn’t mentioned so.’

‘He isn’t Hannibal’s. He’s seventeen.’

Will had never had to deal with the judgment that came with having a child so young, as no one had known about it until a little over a year ago. He felt the full thrust of Emmett’s judgement now, and he let it settle between them until Emmett looked away, sucking down onto his cigarette.

‘In bonding ceremonies in medieval Europe, omegas were mated in public during their first heat. The most accurate way to confirm children to be born from a bond.’

‘Well I’m glad I don’t live in medieval Europe,’ Will appeased, kept his lips tight. He tried to let go of the impulsive fury, even when he felt the anger cloud him briefly. ‘You hold those beliefs?’

‘I believe we have diluted the sanctity of a bond over the years. Children thrive best with their omega parents close by. Male omegas are so rare in particular, why wouldn’t I want you to be cherished?’

‘Hannibal doesn’t share those beliefs which I’m grateful for. I owe him…everything.’ The simpering tone *killed* Will on the inside. He kept his eyes down on the ground, ignoring the way Emmett was clearly looking him up and down, Hannibal’s styling worked to good effect. ‘I trust him to take care of me. I was lucky to find him, I know. That he took me on with all my baggage.’

‘I’m sure you repay him as best as you can.’ Emmett may well have licked his lips with how he appeared to be salivating. Will pissed off most of the alphas he knew. And he wasn’t used to such open lust. Maybe Emmett was horny and lonely. Maybe he didn’t have enough contact with unmated omegas that being in the presence of one was blowing his mind.

‘I don’t know much, but I know how lucky I am that Hannibal loves me.’

‘Of course.’ Emmett inhaled again, and Will stared at the glowing tip as his cheeks hollowed. ‘Hannibal and I rarely see eye to eye. I’m sure you’re aware.’

‘He doesn’t talk work much.’

‘No? I thought he might have brought you here to try to appeal to my better nature. We’ve come to blows in nearly every meeting this past month.’

‘If he wanted to appeal to your better nature, why would he bring his omega along? My kid’s not a year old I imagine you think I should be at home with her?’ A flash of something hot burned in Emmett’s pale eyes, but Will rubbed a hand over his face and hunched his shoulders, pretending to feel ashamed. ‘I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said anything. I don’t mean to offend.’

‘I’m not offended.’ Will supposed that Emmett would rarely take offensive at something a lowly omega would say. He’d save the wrath for someone he saw on the same level. Like Hannibal. Still, he pulled his hands away from his face and looked up at the man. It seemed to work as Emmett’s eyes poured slowly over Will’s body; waist to mouth and then down again.

‘I could be a buffer. If you need one?’ Will said. He took a step forward, not indecently close, but enough so that Emmett’s overindulgence in cheap cologne burned Will’s nose. ‘He’s stubborn. I bet you are too. I stay out of politics but come over for dinner sometime. Hannibal loves to cook for an audience. I’d love…to get to know you more.’

‘I’m finding you incredibly persuasive, Will,’ Emmett said, a fool to his own greed and biology. Will gave him a closed smile, rolled his fingers over the ring caught in the chain at his neck, and felt Emmett’s eyes burning him up. ‘Perhaps you’ll have me make a friend of Hannibal.’

‘Or maybe just one of me,’ Will said, rolling his head to the side just briefly, enough so that it revealed an expanse of his bared neck.

Hannibal arrived just as they headed back inside. Will shivered like he was cold, because Emmett seemed to enjoy the idea of him being vulnerable. He’d offered his jacket to Will several times, who denied it with a gentle *‘Hannibal wouldn’t like that.’* His hands were wandering and close, and Will allowed it because soft and welcoming omegas would, even if it burned him up and left him desperate to bleed the asshole out on the marble staircase.

When Hannibal reappeared, buoyant and smug, Will tucked himself beneath his arm, lidding his eyes in Emmett’s direction and more or less smelling the effect it had on him. How he had the audacity not to be embarrassed wasn’t lost on Will.

‘Take me home?’ Will said, just loud enough for Emmett to hear. He blinked up at Hannibal, who stared at him with a hint of good humour.

In the car, five minutes later, Hannibal turned to Will beside him. Will was maybe half a minute away from asking for the partition to be closed between them and the driver and planting himself firmly in Hannibal’s lap. A night flirting with an asshole alpha had left him hard and wet with a fluttering pulse.

Hannibal kept him suitably distracted by discussing Emmett instead. ‘How did you find him?’

‘A bigot. A sleaze. Somehow willing to put aside his hatred of you if it means sniffing around me a few moments longer. Pathetic, really. Did you get what you needed?’

‘Yes.’

‘Is that all you’re giving me?’

‘Tonight, yes. I’ll explain more in the morning.’

They were naked not twenty minutes after they had arrived home. Will was on his back on their bed, writhing on three of Hannibal’s fingers crooked into his ass, wet with his own slick. Hannibal’s other hand wrapped around Will’s thickening cock, his tongue curling over and inside his wet cunt.

‘Fuck.’ Hannibal’s tongue swirled over his clit just as his fingers twisted over the head. Will arched his back, his throat bared, biting down on his own knuckles as he clenched around the fingers in his ass.

‘Want you,’ Will said, desperate for it before he came apart. His thighs were shaking, dripping slick in slow, easy trails down the insides of his thighs. Hannibal’s fingers slid from inside him, his head poking up from between Will’s legs, teeth biting into the flesh of his thigh, chin glistening. His fringe fell forward, catching in his eyes and tickling the delicate flesh of Will’s inner thigh.

‘Where would you like me?’ Hannibal said, moving bodily until he was pressed completely on top, the heavy weight of him a welcome relief. His lips folded over Will’s jaw, sucking down a mark. Will rolled his hips, gaining friction over his cock, sliding his wet thighs over Hannibal’s hips.

Will pushed his hand down, trapping it between their sweaty bodies. He’d been wet since the party. The scent of alpha, the scent of *interested* alpha, had set him off. How acting simpering and vulnerable had caught the eye of Emmett, how easy it had been once he mastered the art of a submissive idiot. Then Hannibal and his scent and the love that spun a sticky web between them that left Will high with a brimming, shuddering adrenaline. He rocked his hips up, spreading his legs wider, guiding Hannibal’s cock between his legs.

Hannibal was gentle with him, more than he needed to be. *God.* Will hadn’t been this wet in forever. Maybe since that fake-heat that Verger had put him in, but he didn’t really remember much about it. He hummed at the slight burn, but his body made smooth work of taking Hannibal inside. *Always.* The grazing of sharp teeth over his throat. The ghost of a promise of what was to come.

‘Tell me how I feel,’ Will said, blinking up at Hannibal, hands sliding up, to push back the long strands of hair falling over his eyes, his legs rolling up and crossing over the small of Hannibal’s back, where sweat was pooling, making his heels slide in their grip. Hannibal’s nose slid over his cheek smoothly, rolling into a damp kiss.

‘You feel wet. Slick. Tight.’ Hannibal could go so quiet in the bedroom, all alpha strength that left little room for talk, but Will had always liked it, liked to hear what Hannibal felt. What Will made him feel. ‘You cling to me so tightly.’

‘You feel good too,’ Will said and then gasped when Hannibal rolled his thumb over his clit. His own hand squeezed tightly at his own cock, dripping with pre-come. Hannibal rocked inside him, slow at first before an arm under his thigh pressed it to Will’s chest and he slid deeper. They both shuddered. ‘You want to knot me? Make me yours?’

‘You’re already mine.’ Words whispered tight, nudged beneath his ear. Will writhed, moaning when one of Hannibal’s hands thumbed over his tight chest. He pulled them away and moved them over Will’s eyes instead, shielding his sight.

All he could smell was Hannibal. All he could sense was darkness, shaded by Hannibal’s hands, and all he could feel was his body over Will’s, his thick cock rooted inside, his own body wrapped tight and wet around him, clinging. All he could hear was his own gasps, Hannibal’s staggered breaths and the sweaty slap of skin as they moved over the bed.

Will came with a fist over his cock, his heels digging tight into Hannibal’s tailbone. He was a curved arch as Hannibal’s hands slid from his eyes, one sliding beneath his head, the other

against the slick space between his back and the sheets. He was cradled as Hannibal rocked into his body in deep, slow movements. It was only when Will felt the loosening of his muscles, that he felt Hannibal press tighter; his knot locking them in place.

Will felt like he was floating. He felt caught, felt teeth pressing to his throat. Felt protected and safe, like he was the perfect fit for the man that needed him. He pressed a shaking hand to the sharp slope of Hannibal's cheekbone and sighed.

'You're wonderful,' Will said and then laughed, embarrassed at the admission. But then he saw the way Hannibal looked at him. He pulled him down, so their bruised lips pressed together. He could feel himself filling up, but he wouldn't catch. He was back on birth control.

'There will be freedom for you in the constraints of our bond, Will.' Hannibal's words sounded like a promise, and Will eagerly nodded his head. Too caught up to wrap himself up in his usual protective barbs.

Chapter 3

Over breakfast Hannibal handed Will a tablet filled with the images he had downloaded from Emmett's computer the night before. Will was used to awful men. He was an awful man. Hannibal too. But they dished it out to those that played dirty back, not strangers, not in this way. Politics was such a nasty game, Will had never been a fan.

'Some of the people in these photos are fellow councilmen. Some are their families. Their addicted children, their vulnerable spouses. Their own personal weaknesses exposed.' Will flicked through the downloaded images on the tablet. Fuzzy hotel room security. Half-naked women. All generic, all very cloak and dagger. All incredibly damning.

'Won't he think it obvious that you've trapped him with me?'

'I have been told on several occasions that I flaunt attention. You are certainly something to flaunt. I think it worked perfectly in our favour.'

'He bought it,' Will admitted, remembering the slow drag of eyes pulling over his body. He placed the tablet on the table, feeling a little uneasy about what he'd seen. 'I invited him for dinner at some point.'

'No, I don't think I want him in the house,' Hannibal said. But Will was almost certain that was a control thing. Territorial Alpha bullshit. 'But I always lead the Hopkins annual charity gala. I would like for you to go in my place. You should invite him.'

'Where will you be?'

'Attending to other engagements. That's what you'll tell him,' Hannibal said. 'You're to see him at functions. Nowhere else. Don't take him on by yourself. We have to be careful about this.'

'Right. Okay.' Will ignored the last part, refusing to let Hannibal dictate how and when the game played out. Humiliating a man like Emmett would be worth it. He just wished they could do it in a way that didn't feel as if he was being humiliated in the process. 'We'll do it your way.'

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Will missed the freedom that came with his little house in Wolf Trap. He missed the expanse of nothingness that filled the periphery. He missed walking for miles with nothing but the company of his dogs, allowing them to lead wherever he was to follow.

It's not as if he didn't have plenty of space to take the dogs out now. Hannibal had thought about them, even if buying the house had seemed absurd and impulsive. Will could almost lose himself in the flat grounds behind the house, could almost pretend it was a year back if he closed his eyes.

You're happy, he told himself, *you have everything you could possibly want.* Yet the emptiness of his life seemed to creep up on him in those moments of quiet when he had nothing else to try and hide behind.

After their mid-morning walk, with the dogs sprawled over the back porch and Greta asleep in the nursery, Will stared blankly at his phone, trying to focus on learning sign language from an overly enthusiastic woman with distractingly white teeth.

Every so often a bang and a collection of loud voices echoed through the wall that separated the kitchen and Hannibal's work office. He'd been doing his level best to ignore it. To keep himself out of trouble and out of the way. Then there was another thud, an angry sound of discontent, and this time Winston raised his head in a soft whine, looking over at Will.

'Alright,' he said. Hannibal wasn't home. Signing off on something or other. Will was supposed to be staying out of it.

The door could be locked from both sides, more for Hannibal's benefit of locking Will out, he was certain. He grabbed the baby monitor and told Winston to wait for him before he walked through the doorway and into the other side.

The room fell to silence when Will found his way into the office. Tobias was there, Hannibal's favoured lawyer. A new kid that he didn't know; must have been a replacement for Matthew. Randall was looking flushed, hair pulled flat to his scalp as if he'd been tugging at it.

'You're making a lot of noise,' Will said, eyeing them all. 'What are you fighting about?'

'I'm handling it, Will,' Tier said, looking as if he wasn't handling it at all.

'It really doesn't sound like it.'

'We've run into an issue with moving some of our assets around. Money needs to be delivered in person. We've lost contact with the person we planned to use,' Tier spoke to Will like he was dumb and not ten years his senior. Bravado probably, but he wouldn't be disrespected like that.

'You're moving physical money around?' Will looked to Tobias, who from expression alone seemed to be as pleased about the idea as Will was.

'A new associate,' Tobias said, with a smile that revealed how unhappy he was. 'I've checked him out. It's legitimate, but I'm concerned about splitting the money up. It's unwise. I've spent all morning making my feelings clear.'

'Why are you splitting it up? That will just add more risk,' Will took a seat beside the new boy and ignored the slow inhale of breath. It was one reason he used to use a neutraliser back when he had a place at the table, but his scent was comforting to Greta and he didn't like to take it from her.

‘Use Bedelia,’ Will said, turning to Tobias again. Bedelia was some godawful associate of Hannibal’s that Will had always found himself jealous of. She travelled a lot, was willing to occasionally work for Hannibal, providing she was handsomely reimbursed. Beautiful in an icy way. Better behaved than Will.

‘Who the fuck’s Bedelia?’ The kid beside him said.

‘Who the fuck are you?’ Will bit back twice as bitter.

‘Will’s married to Hannibal.’

‘I know that,’ the kid said. ‘But why the fuck are you here?’

‘Will, it’s fine. Go back next door. Hannibal asked me to deal with things. I’m dealing with things,’ Randall said. He didn’t look Will in the eye, hadn’t done that since he walked in on him nursing Greta six weeks back. ‘You’re not needed.’

‘You’re arguing. Loudly. Disturbing next door. Listen to Tobias. He seems to be the only one with any goddamn sense.’

‘Will—’

‘Fuck. No one told me Lecter was so fucking whipped,’ the kid said. He wasn’t a kid, not really. Probably early twenties. Old enough, Will figured, that he should know better than to disrespect those around him. Should know better than to disrespect Hannibal when he was being employed by him.

‘I’m handling it, Will,’ Randall said again. ‘Bedelia might go for it, but she’ll only deal with Hannibal.’

Will stood up, not exactly pleased, but at least half-convinced that he was going to use Bedelia. It only made Will certain that Hannibal was making unwise choices, but he couldn’t work out why he was pushing Randall to lead when he was infinitely better at following orders.

‘Lecter’s not bonded you yet, huh?’ The kid said, not stopping even when Tobias mumbled for him to quiet. ‘He better learn to leash the bitch for all our sakes.’

‘Did I ask for your fucking opinion?’ Will grabbed a fistful of lank hair and slammed the kid’s face down onto the table. He cried out. Probably a broken nose. There was a wet splatter of blood when face met table, the crack of bone. Will didn’t care. Didn’t care at all. ‘Don’t fucking talk to me like that again or I swear to God I’ll feed you to my fucking dogs, do you hear me?’

The kid was strong, but Will knew exactly which pressure points to press on to force him down. No one stopped him. *Leashed bitch.* He grabbed the baby monitor from where he’d placed it on the table and threw it down over the back of the kid’s skull, plastic and metal cracking under the pressure.

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Will refused to stay in the house once he made it to the other side. He brought the dogs inside, made a fuss of them and grabbed his sleeping daughter from the nursery. He bundled her into the car seat and made his familiar way back to Wolf Trap. *Won't be able to do this once you're bonded. Won't be able to escape.*

Greta slept the entire ride over, but whatever peace he'd hope to find at his old and nearly empty house was shattered when he saw Abigail's Jeep parked haphazardly to the side of his house. He could smell coffee as he entered. Burned coffee that made his nose scrunch up. He was used to Hannibal's now.

'You don't have a key.' He eyed Abigail wearily as she approached him through the open door.

'I knew where you kept your spare,' she shrugged, giving him a wry smile. He felt a flood of endorphins and pulled her in close with the hand not holding the carrier. She was a continual pain in the ass for him, but the familiarity of her was soothing more than anything else. And he loved her.

'You smell like alpha,' she said, probably sweeter than she meant. 'I hope you're on birth control.'

'Shut up.' He stepped through his front door and noticed a woman with red curls eyeing him brightly from his kitchen table. She had her hands wraps around the sides of his favourite mug. Will frowned at her as Abigail pulled and plucked at the baby in the car seat.

'Geez Will. Are you sure you didn't bend over and fuck yourself? She's practically your clone.' Abigail's voice was muffled into the puffiness of Greta's sleep-suit When she reappeared, both girls were looking at him, Greta's chin sticky with spit.

'I've been told,' Will said absently. Trying not to stress out at the strange woman in his house. 'Who are you?'

'Will, this is Freddie. She's a local journalist. I met her on campus,' Abigail said, hefting Greta up higher into her arms as he rested the car seat down on the floor. Freddie held out a delicate hand, and he touched it briefly, ignoring her stare when she tried to lean in a little too close.

'Oh I know all about Will Graham. You're the omega that killed all those men on a rescue mission.' He wondered whether Freddie knew Abigail was a killer too, that she slaughtered Matthew at Hannibal's table. He wondered where she got that information considering the cops had helped cover it up.

'I don't know what you're talking about,' he countered, looking away when she leaned forward into his space.

He turned instead to Abigail. 'What's happening?'

'Haven't you seen the news about campus?' Abigail took a seat at the table, Greta firmly in her lap. Will took a seat opposite, pushing his glasses back over his face, blocking Freddie

from his sight. ‘About the omega girls?’

‘No?’ Will eyed her curiously.

‘Three girls have gone missing in three months on campus. All omegas. The police are being cagey and won’t release anything, especially not to Freddie. She’s the only one who cares.’

‘You’re an alpha.’ Will could smell it on her, the underlying strength; the arrogance she had at sitting in an unmated omega’s house, drinking his coffee. He wasn’t sure she cared that much. This was the kind of story, that if true, could get her the hell out of college-level journalism ‘They won’t talk to you?’

‘I’m a journalist. Kind of cancels out my status.’ Will could see why. He didn’t like her, didn’t like her in his house. Didn’t like an alpha around him that wasn’t the one he’d spent the night wrapped up with. Didn’t like that she was cozying up to Abigail, who had *finally* settled down.

‘Will, I was telling Freddie you used to be a cop. We thought maybe you would have some connections. That’s why we came.’

Will wanted to laugh, he really did. ‘I worked the beat down in New Orleans over five years ago. I didn’t touch Maryland. I don’t know anyone that would have any sway.’ Will had been a rigid little thing, too sharp, his senses too dulled. There had been no love lost when he had left, only a lot of raw knuckles on both sides.

Abigail looked disappointed for a moment, her thin hands clutching Greta tight. The more he looked at her, the more he wanted to relent, but the more he wanted to relent, the more exhausted he felt. Abigail’s schemes more often than not left him shattered.

‘Is she deaf?’ Freddie asked, breaking his thought process. Will turned to watch her staring at Greta, who was babbling away, one tiny fist shoved into her mouth, the other wrapped around Abigail’s finger.

‘I need to take a shower. Can you watch her for a while? We can talk more after.’ Will ignored Freddie and how her comment made his chest burn.

‘Other than the fact they’re female omegas, is there anything linking the disappearances? What they look like? Interests?’ Will asked when he had cleaned up. He sat opposite the two women, rubbed his hands over his face and then covered his eyes with his glasses. When they shook their heads in unison, he frowned. ‘And there’s been no statement from the police, nothing?’

‘They’re keeping it quiet,’ Freddie said. ‘I’m well known and disliked, I can’t get anything from them. Then Abigail mentioned that her legal guardian is a city councillor, and he could investigate. Wrong jurisdiction, but better than what we have right now.’

‘I’m not involving Hannibal in this.’ Will felt the spark of protectiveness light up in his chest. It had been a while until he had been called to protect Hannibal, too busy being the personal milkmaid to his beloved spawn. After the fight with the men he was still burning with frustration, cut down like he was nothing. *A bitch to be leashed.* ‘There’s this guy that Hannibal works with. A fellow councillor. I uh. I might go to him and ask. He’s taken a liking to me.’

A few minutes later and with very little to go on, Freddie said she needed to use the bathroom, which Will thought was almost a guarantee that she was snooping, but with most of his stuff in boxes, it was a relatively empty house and he had very little to hide.

‘Are you and Freddie a thing?’ he asked Abigail coolly over the table when he heard the bathroom door lock.

‘Will.’ Abigail’s shrill response warned him that she was annoyed that he would even ask, but he shrugged his shoulder in response.

‘If you are, grow a brain and move on. If you’re not, don’t start. You can screw whoever you want, but not people like her. And don’t get pregnant by anyone.’

‘You’re not exactly one to talk.’ She crossed her arms over her waist, but she was smirking despite the flush on her face. ‘I’m not an idiot, Will. And you’re not my father.’

‘You intrude on my life; I can intrude on yours. Those are the rules,’ he smiled. It wasn’t pleasant, he didn’t do pleasant smiles, but she still laughed at him warmly. ‘And I know I’m not your father, but I don’t know... I care about you like you’re mine.’

‘Do you want me to call you mom?’ She teased, despite how she laid a gentle hand on his, her arm stretched over the table to reach. ‘Gabe says he calls you mom now and I find that fucking hilarious.’

‘Shut up,’ he said, but he didn’t mean it. He never meant it with her. He rolled his hand over until their palms met and squeezed her hand lightly. ‘You’re keeping out of trouble, right?’

‘Always.’ She sounded sincere this time and started talking to him about her course as Freddie came back into the room.

His phone had been vibrating in his pocket for the last hour, something that he was struggling to hide from Abigail. Freddie was walking the grounds, and he knew he should be suspicious, but there was nothing around that would ever be a cause for concern. He’d never been foolish enough to take *work* home with him. Anyway Will felt way more relaxed when she wasn’t around, her bright eyes burning holes into his skin.

‘What have you done this time?’ Abigail asked, Greta’s favoured soft bunny in her hand, the left ear a little damp from where it was perpetually hanging from the baby’s mouth. Will eyed his phone and saw Hannibal’s name light up.

‘I hit one of his men with the baby monitor this morning,’ Will admitted, refusing to smile even when Abigail broke into laughter.

‘Why did you marry him?’

‘I wanted Greta to have a family. More than what I had. More than what Gabe or you were given. And Hannibal and me, we haven’t been with anyone else for years. Just made sense. It would be a lot easier if I wasn’t me and he wasn’t him.’

‘Yeah, but then you wouldn’t be together.’

‘Probably not.’ He rubbed a tired hand over his face and fell back into his chair. ‘I’ve already agreed to help you, but I want you to help me with something too.’

She had been so desperate to help last year. So desperate to work with Hannibal until she’d burned herself out entangling with Matthew. But he could do with her support. Could do with having her close again.

‘I have—‘ he paused, touched his chin. ‘Hannibal wants me to take a prominent role in some of his…personal events. The parties and stuff. A test before he lets me have any more control.’

‘But you hate the parties.’

‘I know.’ He smiled at her. ‘Might not be so bad if you were there too. I think there’s one coming up. Hannibal wants me to invite Emmett, and I’d like to have you beside me.’

‘I don’t know,’ Abigail said, suddenly fidgeting.

‘I’ll hate every second a little bit less with you there,’ he said, which was as soft as he’d ever get. ‘I’ll buy you a new dress.’

‘Because I’m *really* the sort to be persuaded in that way?’ Her smirk was crooked again, and he rolled a shoulder. ‘You wanted to take a role in the family business. So do I. Two against one, right? Hannibal can’t say no to both of us if we play it right.’

‘You were the one that was so dead-set against me doing anything.’

‘Yeah, well things have changed. And if he gives me more power it means I can micromanage you better than he ever would.’

‘Will Graham I think you’re trying to manipulate me.’ A wry smile appeared on Abigail’s face. Any sharp edges that had appeared had softened, and the atmosphere felt easy between them.

‘Maybe.’ He had no real reason to deny it. He looked over to her, matching her small smile. ‘It’s working, right?’

‘Big time.’

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Will thought it was a sign of his own growth that he made it back to the house before Hannibal threatened to drag him home. He had seen Abigail and Freddie off with a weary glance towards the journalist, but he reminded himself that Abigail was both grown and not actually his daughter. She had to make her own decisions.

Flowers were sitting on the doorstep when he approached. A gaudy spray of orchids and lilies in pinks and yellows, wrapped in blue cellophane. He picked them up with one hand, dropping them down onto the kitchen table. They were from Emmett, thanking him for entertaining him at the fundraiser. Will laughed, pressed a kiss to his daughter's cheeks and waited for Hannibal to say something once he returned home.

Will didn't like flowers and was generally irate when Hannibal bought them for him. They were acceptable only when bought as a way to brighten the place up and he'd said on more than one occasion that he'd *'rather a blow job if you feel that guilty.'*

'From Emmett I presume?' Hannibal said, by way of greeting, his eyes immediately centred on the flowers. He kissed Will and then placed a brand-new baby monitor on the table. 'A replacement. I heard there was an incident this morning with the previous edition.'

'You want to have it out now or later?' Will asked, avoiding eye contact. 'He had it coming.'

'I'm aware of what was said. Would you like to talk about it?' Hannibal took a seat beside him. His scent was warming and heady, Will held out a hand so that he could take Hannibal's. He held the offered hand up to his cheek, pressing it to his skin and closing his eyes.

'I told Abigail last year that no one respected me, that they were just too scared of you to say anything, but I didn't believe it. I thought they had a little respect. Now I've had your kid, now that I've been relegated to your fucking spouse and it's been made perfectly clear where my place is.'

Hannibal was silent for a beat, enough that Will dropped the hand from his face and looked over at him with his lips pressed tight together. 'Is there something that you would like me to do about it?'

'No one told me that by having your kid, I would lose everything else in my life. I want to be the person I was last year and keep what I have now. Also Tier's in way over his head. Tobias was the only one with his head screwed on right, and you know how I feel about him.'

'Of course.' Will sensed that Hannibal was humouring him, teasing his abrasiveness, but he found himself too tired to care.

'I'm sorry. How was your day?'

The conversation was amiable after that. Will tried hard to be pleasant, and even though it wasn't a *real* bond yet, he still felt comforted and cosseted in the bubble they created. He told Hannibal about Abigail, about the *friend* she brought with her, but not the issue regarding omegas. Will would ask Emmett for help with that and he wanted to do it on his own terms.

After dinner, Will walked the dogs, leaving Hannibal and Greta to have time alone. He followed the dogs as they weaved in and out of trees, the sound of their paws and collars so familiar and so comforting that it transported him to his little house in the woods. He didn't want to go back in time, but then maybe he did. Change was coming. Sooner rather than later. His heat was impending, and then he would be Hannibal's and any choices that were once his would fade into nothing. He closed his eyes and crouched down as the emotions weighed heavily on his shoulders, pulling down onto his chest, constricting him. He jumped as he felt Winston's damp, snuffling nose press against his cheek.

'I'm okay,' he said to the dog, scruffing the top of his head and peeling his eyes open. 'Just thinking.'

Things had changed so much, so so much.

Will pulled himself together and refocused as he bent down low, to throw a branch in Winston's direction. The hardest part of this would be playing a role and making it believable for longer than the hour that he'd spent with Emmett previously. But he could manipulate like anyone. And Hannibal liked that side of him. And Abigail, she had gone to him and not Hannibal about this issue. He could fix it in his own way.

Will called Emmett's office as Winston bounded over to him, the tree branch fixed between teeth, Buster nipping at his heels. He left his name and number and put on a voice that was mostly a gentle whisper as he thanked him for the flowers and asked if they could meet. He had something he was desperate to talk to him about.

'There is something we should discuss. I would appreciate you not taking offence.' On principle, Will wanted to take offence at the comment alone, but he held back. It was eleven-thirty, and he was in bed. Back when he had the club, he often wouldn't leave until after two am. Something else that had changed. He watched Hannibal prowl around their bedroom before taking a seat beside him.

'What is it?'

'Your heat.'

'Is it my amplified pissiness or paranoia that's making you aware of the impending approach?' Will asked, sliding his hand up Hannibal's bare arm, over his shoulder, and then until it cupped the back of his warm neck.

'Your scent is powerful. You often become more violent when it approaches. I understand you are struggling with your current situation—'

'I became *violent,'* Will interrupted, 'when that dickhead implied you'd be leashing me like a dog when we bonded. I don't…I don't want to talk about it.'

'Of course. But I would like to discuss your heat with you.'

‘Why? It’s not like you haven’t fucked me before.’

A flash of teeth as Hannibal bowed his head. ‘Have you ever shared a heat with anyone, Will?’

‘You know I haven’t,’ Will said. It wasn’t like they never spoke about previous partners, but then they rarely liked to linger on the past either. Sex had always been complicated. Traumatised after his first time, doped up on suppressants throughout his sad little life as a cop. He had slept with a handful of betas, but nothing and no one had ever stuck around like Hannibal had.

‘We should discuss the technicalities. I don’t want to arrive at the point of your heat and not have your direct consent about how things are likely to pan out.’

Sensing the discomfort in Hannibal’s tone, Will’s eyebrows raised. ‘How do you mean?’

‘I’m unlikely to go into a rut. I would like for you to have as comfortable a time as is possible even if I cannot always give you what you need.’

‘It isn’t very comfortable.’ It was mostly feeling sweaty and horny between bouts of low mood. Really, Will wasn’t sure his was the greatest reflection on what a heat should be like, only that that it was a something that he sucked up and got over quickly.

‘I presumed you’ve used toys.’

‘Are you anticipating performance anxiety?’ Will rolled onto his back again, laughing brightly to himself, immeasurably cheered up at the thought. ‘You’re a fine lover, Hannibal. You don’t need me to tell you that.’

‘I don’t doubt it, but you are demanding at the best of times. I imagine in heat you are far worse, and our refractory periods may not line up perfectly.’ A tingle of embarrassment pinched at his cheeks at being referred to as *demanding,* but he figured Hannibal wouldn’t actually want him any other way.

‘I’ll make sure my birth control is secure. I’ll order some over-the-counter stuff as well. I’d rather just have you, but if we need to use anything else we can.’ Will stared up at their ceiling, freshly painted and a dark grey. Easier than staring at Hannibal’s face. ‘I want it to happen at home.’

‘You are home.’

‘Wolf Trap. I want it to happen in Wolf Trap.’

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Alphas liked omegas in light colours, or so the magazine at the grocery store had explained when Will flicked through a copy as he waited at the checkout. So he wore a light grey suit to lunch with Emmett. Greta safely deposited to Franklyn for the afternoon. Hannibal was out of town for a few days for *work purposes*, so he didn’t bother telling him what he was up to. Will didn’t need his permission.

He'd used cologne sparingly, enough that his natural scent came through. He had been so close to backing out, but he remembered the young omegas in college, and he thought about the idea that Abigail could be next and it spurred him on. He had his knives strapped close to his body, warmed by his skin. Focusing on that kept his nerves at bay.

Will thanked him for the flowers and smiled with his eyes downcast, as if he secretly enjoyed compliments. He chose an appetiser rather than a main, small plate, small appetite, all to make him seem more delicate. He asked questions about work and laughed nervously whenever Hannibal was mentioned.

'I haven't seen him around the last few days.'

'He's dealing with business,' Will said, ignoring that business included Bedelia, Tobias, and a delivery of goods out of state.

'So what is this about?'

'I need to ask a favour of you. It's delicate,' Will said, taking a sip of water and looking at Emmett's thick neck. He'd eaten steak that was too well-done for Will's tastes. Hannibal wouldn't have allowed it onto the table for a minute before it was sent back in polite disgust.

'So delicate that you cannot ask Hannibal?'

'I don't want him worrying. It's about Abigail. She's his…*our* daughter.'

'I thought your daughter was called Gretal?'

'Greta. Abigail, well I sort of inherited her from Hannibal. She's in college. She came to me asking for help and I can't go to Hannibal because it will upset him. You know what he gets like if things aren't done his way.' Will left the implication up in the air and watched the arrogant tilt to Emmett's jaw settle. 'It will worry him, and I don't want to do that. I know this will concern you too.'

Will watched as Emmett's chest puffed out. A down-trod omega begging for attention. Hannibal Lecter's simpering bitch, desperate for his help rather than his supposed-mate. Will knew all the right cards to play.

'Please. Tell me what you need.' Will spoke cautiously, reiterating all that Freddie and Abigail had said. The missing omegas. The police acting blasé about the entire affair.

'I know you don't have any jurisdiction up there, but you must know someone. Could you have a word? I'm worried for Abigail's safety.'

'I'm all for omegas furthering their education before you get upset,' Emmett said, and Will smiled rather than fumed, swallowing down the need to fight back. 'Of course, I'd love to help, but I'd be risking Hannibal's wrath if he knew.'

'He doesn't need to know. I don't plan on telling him.' Will rolled his wrists on the table, so the veiny insides were facing up. Everyone mentioned his delicate fucking wrists. Hannibal

could wrap his entire hand around one. Now, Emmett looked down at them, the pointed tip of his tongue poking out between his teeth. Will was not foolish enough to tilt his throat to him.

‘Perhaps that would mean you wouldn’t mind helping me out from time to time.’ Emmett’s fingers were close to Will’s own, enough that the edge of his thumbnail rolled the wedding band on Will’s finger. Will looked up at him, eyes lidded, and swallowed.

‘Anything. I’ll do anything for my children.’

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Will awoke and he knew it was coming. There was a sluggishness that came with his pre-heat. The last pre-heat he’d had, Will had gone to Hannibal desperate for sex after a night of vicious torture. Hannibal had sent him back to Wolf Trap and Will had expected his pre-heat to sink into the real thing, but it had dissipated into a dry headache. A week later he was at the doctor’s; a week later he found out he was pregnant.

‘My heat’s coming,’ Will said down the phone to Hannibal, as he fed the dogs that morning. Greta was sitting up in her highchair, propped up by cushions to stop her sliding down. ‘I called Abigail already. She’s coming down to look after Greta. I uh. I wanna do it here at my place, but the girls can go to yours. Abigail can handle it, she’s good with her.’

There was silence on the other line. Will looked down at his daughter, at the blood pumping slowly in his ears. ‘Why aren’t you saying anything?’

‘I didn’t think that this day would come or that you would ask this of me.’

‘I know,’ Will rubbed his forehead, a nervous habit he’d never been able to quit. ‘Don’t miss your fucking flight.’

‘I wouldn’t miss this for the world.’

‘Alright.’ Will was appeased slightly. Technically Hannibal had fucked him through a heat, but that had been induced; artificial, short-lived and painful. This wouldn’t be that. By the end, he’d be Hannibal’s. His bond-mate. His belonging. Worth it, he told himself. It would be worth it.

He still had work to do. Abigail would be here by the afternoon, but he wanted to spend a little time with Greta. She was his; no one knew her like him, no one could comfort her when she cried like he could. By tomorrow night, when his heat was at its peak, she could come back. He could feed her, cuddle her, and play with her, learn signs and realise that she seemed to understand them more than she did when he spoke. He would make sure she didn’t fuss with the aids. She was good with them mostly, but he dreaded the day she tossed one to the dogs.

He thought about dropping Greta off at Franklyn’s for a few hours as he set up a meeting with Anthony. Franklyn was alpha and unmated. Not exactly enough to send Will’s head spinning, but enough that he felt uneasy about their friendship being tainted by his heat. Will

met Anthony at the club. He still had a key, and he had watched the place enough to know that the current manager never showed up before an hour before opening.

‘I used to run this place, baby girl,’ Will said to Greta, bouncing her in his arms. The floor still felt stick under foot, as if it hadn’t been thoroughly cleaned the night before. With the lights on, he could see dust clinging to the bottles lining the wall behind the bar and the stage could do with a proper polish too. He’d put everything he had into this place; it made him ache inside, seeing it fall to this. ‘Papa needs to hire better replacements.’

Anthony left him waiting nearly twenty minutes past their arranged meeting. Will had felt his head slip heavier into that heated place as his daughter finally fell asleep and he took a seat at a table nearer the stage, drinking water and feeling himself sweating even in the cool room.

Anthony burst through the backdoor when Will let him in, a cloud of exuberance that had Will backing away. He seemed to tower over Will. Too much on a good day, even worse when he was so close to his heat.

‘Isn’t she a doll,’ Anthony said, peering down at Greta, asleep in the stroller. ‘The best-behaved baby I’ve ever seen.’

‘I’m not so sure. I think she takes after Hannibal in personality and she’s going to raise hell once she’s older.’

He smirked, as if he understood what Will was implying. ‘You look quite peaky, Will.’

‘I’m uh preheat. First one since Greta so uh. Can we keep this brief? I need to get back to Virginia.’

‘I’m all ears.’

Will explained everything. His conversations with Emmett. That he’d seen the evidence of blackmail. ‘I um. I’m supposed to be getting information from him regarding some missing kids up at my daughter’s college, but he wants something in return.’

‘Sex?’

‘We’ve been playing in the lines of inference. He wants to humiliate Hannibal. He thinks I’m desperate for his help. Anyway, I’m like six hours away from bonding so that might piss him off. The photos aren't enough. There’s no guarantee that the people he’s blackmailed will want to go public.’

‘Are you asking me to tattle on rumours?’

‘You’re an omega working directly with a raging bigot who thinks our kind should stay at home all day breeding. I think you’ve had to deal with more shit than you let on. It would be anonymous. I’d leave your name out of it.’

Anthony almost looked like he was hesitating. A dip in the confidence he’d portrayed until now. ‘Why do you hate him? Why do you really care?’

‘I used to be a cop. Not a great one. I spent my entire career being ridiculed by those I worked with. I know what it’s like. I know harsh jokes; I know all the little digs. You wear the bravado well, but don’t think that I can’t see through the facade.’

‘If my bravado is false, then why can no one else see through it?’

‘It’s not that fucking dramatic.’ Will closed his eyes and hummed, because that came to him easier than speaking the truth. ‘I’ll need backup. I don’t want to tell Hannibal yet, not this side of it. I want to handle it on my own, but I might need some support.’

‘Honestly, I don’t work close with Emmett at all. He requests someone else from the department. He’s not comfortable with an omega, even one on suppressants.’

Will laughed, his eyes slotting open briefly. ‘This is you doped up?’

‘It’s a condition of my job. If you were a cop, you know what the policy is.’ Will nodded his head, but it made the room twist and distort. ‘Did you know I failed the standardised tests when I was five? I never really felt my status. Although the heats *are* a riot.’

Will couldn’t say that he ever felt like his status was wrong; never felt like he’d been poured into the wrong mould, just that society had imposed limitations on his life that he could do without.

‘I’m a bit scared,’ Will said beneath the cloud fogging his mind. His eyes peeled open, rocking his cheek into one damp palm. ‘What if he changes his mind?’

There was hesitation for a few moments, until Will realised what he had said, and Anthony had realised what Will had confessed.

‘I won’t pretend to understand Hannibal like you do. He seems to be a mystery folded in on itself, but I have seen the way he looks to you and I don’t think you have anything to worry about in that regard.’

‘I’ll kill him if he leaves me and he knows it. Not when he’s dragged me this deep under.’

‘I bet he does.’ Will hadn’t opened his eyes for a solid minute now, and the nervous roiling inside his stomach was picking up. He could feel his chest tightening. He wanted to roll his face down into his sheets and not come up for air until Hannibal was around to fuck him through it. ‘You’re in a bit of a state over there, Will. How about I drive you home?’

‘Hm,’ Will nodded his lips, trying to pull himself together. ‘I don’t think I can drive myself.’

Will napped in his car on the drive home. He felt bad for Anthony, or he would have if he was functioning as normal, but as it was, he drove them back in relative silence. He was grateful that he was of the same status. There was something calming in his scent, as faint as it was.

‘Abigail made me tell her all our little secrets during my last pre-heat. All my bad omega behaviour.’

‘Who’s Abigail?’

‘She’s like my daughter, but she’s not really.’ Will rubbed at his face and tried to distract the lethargy by turning into the backseat. Greta stared back at him with his own eyes and he signed *l love you* and watched her tiny fists clasp in the air in response.

‘This is a little out in the sticks,’ Anthony said, when they pulled down his rugged dirt road. Abigail’s Jeep was parked out front, as well as Hannibal’s Bentley. Something behind his naval tugged, flipping his stomach over and over.

Will wouldn’t say he was particularly present as he entered the house. His feet moved him forward, up his dirt path, his eyes blinking slowly, fuzzy around the edges. He still expected his dogs every time he came home, but they were established back in their new house and there was no one to greet him apart from Abigail and Hannibal standing in his kitchen.

Abigail took a sleeping Greta, with the promise of returning late tomorrow when Will would be past the worst of it. She took Anthony with her, which in a more rational state of mind, would concern him. Will knew he would be in for an explanation from Hannibal about his meeting with Anthony come the other side of his heat, but he didn’t want to think about that now. He *couldn’t* think about that now. He pressed his face into Hannibal’s neck, breathing in his scent, feeling it wrap around him.

‘Stay out of my head. Promise me you’ll stay out of it.’

Hannibal’s hand cupped beneath his jaw, thumb pressing to soft muscle. The heady scent of him, the warmth of his body, the strength of his hands, wrapped around Will’s neck was so intoxicating he could feel himself falling under quicker and quicker. He wanted to drown beneath the touch of Hannibal and come out the other side as something new.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘The last time you locked yourself in the bathroom was three hours into your labour. I’d rather us not go through the same process again.’

By the time they had made it upstairs, Will had locked himself in his bathroom and refused entry to Hannibal. The scent of him was thick in his mouth, his heart was racing and his words were seizing up, but beneath it fear bubbled below. His stomach wrapped itself up in a familiar knot as panic tried to take over, Hannibal remaining placid on the other side of the door.

Will’s fingers curled tight over the cool edges of the sink, damp forehead pressed to the fogged mirror. The scent of Hannibal was calming the ache inside, the hollowing of the slick melting between his legs. It gave him a chance to clear his head, to rationalise what they were doing.

‘What the fuck are we doing? Why the fuck are we doing this? We… we worked so much better before. When we fucked and minded our own goddamn business and we sure as fuck weren’t married.’

‘Your decision, I recall.’

‘Didn’t want my daughter growing up fucked up like the rest of us.’ Will was no longer pressed against the mirror, but had his damp cheek lolling against the worn wooden door. ‘We all just kill... we just kill and Abigail kills and fuck, Gabe helped kill Verger, and I never talked to him about it and he seems fine and that’s—’ the latch to the door opened and Will shuddered as he stepped out.

Hannibal was standing between the bed and the bathroom, hands clasped behind his back. Will held his hands out, waiting for Hannibal to take them. He did, hands wrapping around his wrists. His heart jumped, his body weak. His skin was slick with sweat, felt like he was sliding through Hannibal’s grip, sliding out of his own mind.

‘Fuck me over and I swear I’ll bring you down.’

‘Shh, Will. Let me take care of you,’ Hannibal said, pulling him forward toward the bed.

When Will woke up, it was sometime late evening, and he was wet. Everywhere was wet. His hair was sodden and flattened down to his head; his skin glistening with sweat. His heart was a jackrabbit when he crossed his hands over his chest. One hand slid down, the glide over his stomach easy with sweat, could smell sex in the air; his cock stiff and eager, damp at the head.

A hand curled over his thigh, familiar in length, large and solid. Nails neat and long enough to leave a mark. Will turned his head, batting his eyelids open to the sight of Hannibal beside him. He'd shed himself of his clothes too; all warm furred skin and muscle. Hannibal's eyes settled on Will's and not down at his body. Will still had enough sense to be thankful for that.

Will twisted onto his stomach, his spine curved into his lordosis position. Never had he ever done this with anyone before. Never had he wanted to. He could feel the sweat pooling at the base of his spine; cooling his heated body and his cock hard and wet between his stomach and the sheets. He could smell Hannibal, could sense him even if he couldn't lift his face from the pillow. The heady scent burned down into his lungs, making his thighs spread, wet with sweat and slick. He could smell himself, the dark floral scent weighed down with musk.

A warm hand splayed over his spine, pressing into his coccyx. Knuckles grazed his ass, and a moan tugged from between his lips. Then the bed sank, the length of Hannibal's bare body against him.

'Darling boy, what you do to me.' Hannibal's nose nudged behind his ear, kissing against where his hair was curling, Hannibal's knees straddled either side of his hips, one hand dipping between their body's, sliding between Will's cheeks, skimming his tight ass until he slid to where he was dripping.

Fingers entered him and Will felt himself shudder. Couldn't quite bring himself to find words. He'd seen porn; seen omegas screaming in actual heat during the amateur shit he sought out when bored and curious about how he *should* be. He was always so quiet. Heat stunning him to silence. Not that he'd ever had anyone to share it with.

Will squirmed on the fingers rocking into him. A nice pressure made better by the solid weight of Hannibal heavy on top of him, the feel of lips bared, of teeth pressing against the sensitive arch of his neck.

Fingers weren't enough and Will may have been tongue-tied in the moment, but his moans and his gasping and the way he couldn't help but rock his ass back to Hannibal, where he felt the heavy weight of his cock; the head hot and leaking against his cleft, precome trailing down, over his ass and between his legs. He would die, he felt like he would die if he got nothing else.

'Hannibal.' It was enough. One hand pressed down between his shoulders, the other guided the thick head of his leaking cock to where Will was soaked and shuddering and so desperate that he started to come just as Hannibal pressed inside. The clench of his wet body against where Hannibal was pressing tight inside was too much. He sobbed into the pillow, rolling onto his cheek so that he could breathe, so that he could breathe in Hannibal. So that the haze of his heat could take him to that sated place.

He lay there, content for the time being, body filling up. The wet sounds of their bodies meeting every time that Hannibal thrust into him. The heaviness in his stomach didn't go away, but as he was stretched around a knot, as it filled him, it settled into a deep warmth that had his toes curling, his fingers catching knots into the sheets either side of his head.

‘You didn’t bite me,’ Will said, coming back to his mind, his heat sated for the time being. He rolled onto his back, aching between his legs in the way he always did after a knotting. Without the usual relief that came with it. He would build up to that mute state again. Make Hannibal take him and knot him and plug him wet and delirious.

‘You’re a fan of face-to-face intimacy,’ Hannibal said, and the effect Will’s heat had on him was clear in the rough husk of his voice. Will couldn’t quite look at him, curled up beside him, but he’d do anything Hannibal said in this moment. Wouldn’t argue. Wouldn’t have the ability.

The next time was only an hour or so later. Will laid on his back, knees drawn up, feet flat on the bed. Hannibal lay between Will’s open legs, fingers fighting for space with his tongue inside his aching cunt. Will kept a light fist over his flushed cock as it dripped over his taut stomach. God, he wanted to die. Wanted to die in the best way.

Hannibal took him like that, Will’s knees drawn up to his chest, angled out so that they were chest to chest. Will had come once, twice, his body wet and tight. His head rocked back into the pillow and suddenly Hannibal’s lips were in contact with the side of his throat, his teeth nipping against sensitive flesh.

‘Do it,’ Will said, eyesight fading. He closed his eyes when he felt the opening of Hannibal’s jaws against him, when he felt teeth biting down against muscles until his skin tore and teeth sunk down in their last claim.

It was another three rounds in before Will felt himself coming back. Before he allowed Hannibal, whose eyes had darkened and who hadn’t cleaned the blood from his lips, close enough to clean up the wound on his neck. He saw Hannibal in his head and thought that he quite liked it. Not his thoughts, but his mood maybe. All he sensed was awe; lust, an insatiable hunger. Will fell into the hands curled gentle over his neck, desperate for more touch.

They stopped for food, barely dressed. He couldn’t stop touching Hannibal. Had to hold a hand onto his knee, or roll his nose against his throat to get a taste of his scent right down into his lungs at his kitchen table. He wasn’t much use, not for conversation and not for eating. They made love and Will almost wanted to cry. Somehow. Too many emotions. After, he laid back and Hannibal licked him out until he was so sensitive his legs closed by default and he kicked him away. His face, once he saw him, was glazed from lips to chin, but his eyes remained dark and heavy.

Will had wanted Greta back with him after the first night, but Hannibal had convinced him he wasn’t in the right frame of mind, and Abigail agreed to have her until his heat faded. Even when he wasn’t desperate for a knot every couple of hours, he was needy and clinging for a touch. His words would fade, his tongue heavy as Hannibal settled into his mind, draped over his thoughts like a weighted blanket.

’Need to say something.’ Will’s nipples red from where Hannibal had nipped and sucked at them. He ran a hand over them and hissed. His throat wasn’t any better. Hannibal had cleaned up his mating bite, but he was bruised all over. Marked in ways he’d have never allowed before. ‘I want—’

‘What do you want, darling?’ Hannibal’s attentiveness, his calmness and his ability to see Will through this was overwhelming. Will could feel how his mind was clouded by that of his alpha’s. He was there, like a weighted presence in his head that he couldn’t quite resist.

‘If something happens to me, make sure Gabe is looked after. He’s yours now, too. Technically, you’re his step-father. I couldn’t do much about it before, but now I can.’

‘Nothing is going to happen to you.’

‘You can’t guarantee that. Not in this life.’

They ate dinner when they could. They shared baths and showers, and Hannibal worked whenever Will napped. When he wasn’t napping, he was wet and wanting. Begging for Hannibal’s knot.

The last time he was still wet but not begging. Hannibal looked exhausted. He’d kept up, not allowing Will any access to his toys; gotten him off with his hands, his tongue, until he could knot Will over and over. Sometimes, when Will got vicious, when his teeth caught in the bulge of his left bicep, he had growled, pinned Will down by the wrists, holding him there until the blood dried on his lips and he was placated.

Now he writhed his hips over Hannibal’s lap. Sore but somehow needing it. His hair had moved from shower damp to wet with sweat in minutes, but Hannibal would clean him up. He would always clean him up now. He could feel him inside his head now. Not in a way that suggested reading his mind, but an anchor, giving his thoughts something to bounce against rather than the empty walls from before. He might be able to fix his damn stupid mind at last. His fingers curled over Will’s neck, thumb pressing to his bitten throat.

‘I want something else from you,’ Will said, fed and watered and knotted and fucked and bonded and happy with delirium, although he wasn’t sure if it was his own or Hannibal’s. He couldn’t tell them apart.

‘What would you like?’ Hannibal’s voice was rough, caught on all of Will’s edges. Will mouthed at his throat, kissed at his sharp jawline as he moved side to side on Hannibal’s cock.

‘To kill Emmett.’ Hannibal’s eyes flickered, as if he’d expected that Will was going to ask for a knot, or another dog, or something else that he could freely give him with little complaint. Hands circled his hips, bruised and a little battered, thumbs rolling into the joint. ‘He deserves to die.’

‘He is a city councillor and so am I, Will. This isn’t like before. I can’t just go around killing. It took… a lot to cover up what happened at Verger’s. This would be the final straw.’ That seemed a little high and mighty. Not even last year, Hannibal was sending people to their death for being rude enough to betray him. Will laughed, breathless in his face and the comment.

‘You have blackmail against him. Anthony is getting me some and, uh yeah. Right there.’ Will paused, fingers squeezing his hips as if the angle felt good to Hannibal too. ‘Anthony is

getting me some more sources. He deserves to be punished. I just need some information from him about the kidnappings on campus.'

Will glanced at Hannibal's face; the tilt of his head and the furrow of his brow was enough to realise his confusion. 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'We'll tell you,' Will promised. Pressing their mouths together, holding a fistful of Hannibal's hair at the nape of his neck and crying out as he came and came and came. 'I can kill him when the time is right. Make it look like a suicide.'

Two days later, Will was sitting beside Hannibal in an office downtown, registering their bond officially. His neck was tight and stinging where the cuts were healing over, and he wanted to touch Hannibal. Just a brush of their forearms. Or press the outside of their thighs together. His body was still aching as it healed; five showers later and he still felt soaked in Hannibal.

'Everything of mine becomes yours now,' Will told him, as they finalised the paperwork. He had a registered alpha. He was owned. He was property. His kid, too. He knew Hannibal didn't see it that way, but it was true and it stuck to the inside of his mouth bitterly.

'I have better things to do with my time than micromanage you,' Hannibal said, appeasing Will even if he was doing nothing but studiously scouring the paperwork. 'We shall see where this bond will take us, but you're to stop whatever it is you're playing at with Emmett.'

'You think I can't handle it.'

'Me asking you to stop isn't always about thinking you can't handle it, but rather a desire for you not to make things worse.'

'Worse for me or for you?' Will asked, the tension only breaking at the sound of the door opening. The secretary coming back for the paperwork. Hannibal passed it back over with a smile, capping his pen and holding his hand out for Will. Will brushed it off, stepping away from Hannibal as they walked away.

They walked in silence back to the car. Will wasn't that annoyed, just frustrated. Embarrassed because he had to walk around with a wound on his neck that was obvious for what it was, because everyone that knew him from before would see him as finally fulfilling something that he should have wanted all those years he resisted.

'I think I was caught up in pre-heat confusion or I'm just out of practice. I think Abigail was fooled,' Will said in the car, breaking the silence. His brain kept telling him to tell Hannibal to make it easier on himself. He put his hand on Hannibal's knee because touch calmed him; Hannibal's touch calmed him. His nerves seemed to settle in ways he'd never been able to get them to either. Settled them and cleared the fog in his head. 'She fucking played me.'

‘Is this all part of the plan I’m not to know of?’

‘She came to see me a few weeks ago with some journalist she may or may not be screwing. Omega girls on campus have disappeared. The police say there’s no link. I can’t find any reports anywhere about girls going missing. No social media.’

‘I could have helped if you came to me.’

‘The last thing you need is to get involved with out-of-town cops. Abigail came to me because she thought I might have some links from when I was a cop, but I think she’s bullshitting me. I don’t think there're any girls that have gone missing. I knew the journalist was poking around the house, but I was too pre-heat brain-dead to work it out properly. Probably trying to get a good story out of you.’

‘Those bridges have long since burned.’

‘Emmett is going to look into it for me. I was going to use it as a way for him to expect repayment. So he would blackmail me. Threaten me because I hadn’t told you.’ A flash of something over Hannibal’s face and Will felt it in his own head too; the sudden rage. Brought a prickling of goose-pimples up over his arms.

‘Repayment in the form of blackmail. Emmett’s favoured form of currency,’ Hannibal said thoughtfully. Will thought he would be pissed at him for stringing Emmett along like this, but maybe he was still caught up in the post-bond glaze.

‘The best kind.’ Will squeezed his fingers around the taut muscle of Hannibal’s leg, feeling the leanness. Feeling muscle flinch beneath his touch. ‘It will help your cause, but if he even thinks about touching me, I’ll attack him. I’m not averse to forced castration. I wouldn’t have to kill him. I might even bite him. I’ve got a taste for ripping throats out.’

Hannibal laughed, and Will felt the dopamine rush. Wanted to hate himself for falling to the power of chemicals, but swallowed it down. ‘So you’re going to let me continue what I’m doing? You’re not to involve yourself.’

‘Of course. Providing you don’t kill him,’ Hannibal said, almost dutifully, as if Will had any true sway over the situation. ‘You’ve been… getting in the way a little with the men. They’re not at all pleased about our new arrangement. Just… please behave yourself but be rational.’

‘Is this you learning to trust me again?’ Will asked, because he knew the bullshit excuse of needing Will to take care of their daughter was only half the reason he’d lost the club.

‘Your previous behaviour cost me my accountant.’

‘I’d say it was his behaviour that cost you,’ Will said, thinking back to Ingram. It was a lifetime ago, but Will remembered how no one had listened to him, that he’d had to go to Franklyn for help before taking things into his own hands.

‘You lied to me about a great deal last year. I refuse to have you running around causing disruption.’

‘You’re a fucking asshole,’ Will said, looking out of the window as Hannibal pulled out of the parking lot. He didn’t move his hand, felt in his head how *pleased* Hannibal was.

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‘There’s not any girls that have gone missing, are there?’ Will said down the phone to Abigail. She’d gone back to school once Will had recovered enough from his heat. There was enough of a silence that Will knew Abigail felt guilty. She didn’t lie to him very often.

‘Freddie wanted to meet you. She said she’d read the police report about what happened up on Muskrat farm. I knew you would be pissed off, but I wanted to see how you felt about her.’

‘Are you fucking her?’

Abigail scoffed.‘I’m an adult. I’m on suppressants and you would be a hypocrite if you tried to warn me off her considering what *you’ve* done.’

‘What I’ve done?’

‘You were a cop when you met Hannibal and started having sex with him, even when you knew what he was. You used to let him knot you even before you bonded. That’s not exactly rational behaviour. And you had a kid that none of us knew about.’

Will pursed his lips, stopping him from saying anything he would immediately regret considering she was one of the few people in his life he genuinely cared about. ‘Did she find anything interesting on me? She was looking through my house, right? Looking for dirt on me? And you let her.’

‘You have nothing interesting in your house, Will,’ she teased. ‘I knew that or I wouldn’t have let her come. Anyway she wants to write about us. About dad dying and me being raised by the businessman he betrayed.’

‘No.’

‘I knew you’d say that,’ she said. ‘I’m not stupid enough to mention what happened with Matthew.’

‘Matthew was the tip of the iceberg for last year. I know you think she’s great, but do you really think getting close to a journalist is the way forward?’

‘You’re being a hypocrite.’

‘And you know how fucked up my life is for it. If you want to fuck her, then fuck her, but don’t bring her into the rest of our lives. Not Gabe, not Greta and not Hannibal.’

‘Hannibal would just have her sign an NDA, Will. That’s what he usually does.’ The fight had gone from her. He could sense it in the frazzled pitch of her voice. ‘I’m not fucking her.’

‘Good,’ Will said, hanging up.

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The next time he saw Abigail, their argument was mostly behind him. Or at least she didn't bring up Freddie, and neither did Will. She was, he knew, as excited about socialising with Baltimore's elite as he was.

The function was being hosted at the Museum of Art, which was fine enough during the day, but at night, with circular tables filling the function rooms, and the visiting halls darkened and closed off, it just added to the grandeur. Will thankfully would not have to say a speech or do anything other than be a face for the Lecter brand. Really, the only thing involved was Hannibal buying enough tickets to pay for a full table, wiring money through legitimate ways for the new surgical suite and lining the pockets of the governing board.

Abigail looked pretty. A green dress that skimmed the sharp planes of her body. Minimal make-up and her hair left flowing over her shoulders. When he complimented her, she blushed and looked a little lost for words. Didn't happen too often.

'So we just eat dinner with a bunch of rich idiots and pretend we're having a great time?' Abigail asked in the car. Will nodded his head, aware that it sounded just as terrible coming from her mouth as it did in his mind. 'And Hannibal trusts you to be pleasant?'

'Technically, I'm doing this to get information. He thinks giving me motivation will make me behave better.'

'Will it?'

'Maybe,' Will said, wishing that he'd been able to drive. He hated having to be driven around everywhere for these events. He never knew how to distract himself. 'We both have to be on our best behaviour tonight.'

'This is hell,' Abigail said to Will once they were inside. He didn't know who he was supposed to talk to or what about. He stood around, teeth fixed around his bottom lip. Every so often people floated past him to shake his hand. Congratulate him on his new bond. Commiserate that Hannibal couldn't be here with him. The hospital director thanked him on Hannibal's behalf and tried to set up a meeting.

'I'm his husband not his secretary,' he said and the director froze until Abigail fake-laughed beside him, encouraging the man to laugh along with her until he made a quick escuse to leave.

'I had no idea people were so brazen about wanting money from Hannibal,' Abigail whispered. Will knew that he should be moving around the circles. Flaunting himself, or at the very least, showing off in enough of a way that Hannibal would be pleased. But then, Hannibal would never expect that of him. Will wouldn't know the first thing.

It was a dull affair, no better than the previous function at City Hall. By the time they were called through to take their seats, he felt as if he was at wedding, at that mid-point where the ceremony was over and you're stuck on a table attempting to socialise with strangers.

Still, he pulled on the brightest of fake smiles when Emmett finally arrived, taking the empty seat beside Will. His scent was strong, his beady eyes eager on Will. Will drew in a breath, pleased to note that he no longer felt enticed by an alpha's scent if it wasn't Hannibal's.

'I'm surprised Hannibal couldn't make it tonight,' Emmett said, eyes drawn down to Will's freshly scarred throat. There was, Will thought, jealousy wrapped up in the lascivious gaze.

'Well,' Will said, licking his lips and leaning forward only slightly. 'Someone has to stay at home and look after the baby.'

Abigail covered her laugh with a cough, overhearing him from his other side. Emmett didn't seem to notice.

'This is Abigail,' Will said, introducing her when the conversation dulled.

'Your inherited daughter, I remember.' Will sensed the anger from Abigail when Emmett leant over to take a hold of her hand, pressing a wet kiss to the top. The top of one of her heeled shoes kicked Will in the ankle. He swallowed his hiss of pain.

The food was basic and Will picked at it, keeping his head bowed to appear subservient to the alphas gassing up a storm around the table. Abigail wasn't much better, but he forced himself not to spend the entire evening absorbed in their own little bubble together. Abigail stayed by his side during the dinner, but disappeared the moment the godawful self-congratulatory speeches finished and they were encouraged to *mingle.*

'—Unusual for an alpha to allow his omega out on their own so freshly bonded.' Will faded back into Emmett's conversation. He had disappeared briefly to get them drinks, Will's was - he realised - a badly mixed gin and tonic. Something that he had little interest in drinking, anyway.

He took the drink gratefully. It was weak, probably a throwaway comment to the bar staff about it being for an omega still nursing. 'I'm sure we once spoke about Hannibal and his lack of convention.'

'We did.' Emmett smiled. They were against the far wall, between the gallery entrance and the bar. Will pressed his back flush to the solid wall behind him, breathing deep, looking just below the man's weak chin and not his eyes.

'I brought Abigail with me so I'm not alone.' As strong as Emmett's heavy alpha scent was, Will no longer found himself aroused by it. It made it easier to focus, to not succumb to his own biology. 'Did you ever manage to speak to anyone about the missing omegas?'

'I have a meeting set up in a few days.' Will looked at the way his chest puffed out in his polyester suit, damp along the collar from sweat. Eyes were fixed down on his mouth. Will licked his lips, wetting them before biting on the bottom one.

'Oh, that's good.' Will smiled. Let him meet, realise it was all made up and then Will would explain away the lies. Somewhere private where Emmett would try to trap him. Extort him for leverage over Hannibal. Make up for Abigail's lies. 'Let me know how it goes and---' he

leaned in even closer, enough so that his hand rested on Emmett's shoulder. 'Let me know how I can repay you.'

'I'm starting to think you're a dangerous man, Will Graham.' *About goddamn time.* Will said nothing. He could hardly believe that people actually enjoyed flirting. He found it exhausting, another skin that he had to wear; another variant of himself that didn't fit well. It was awkward and cumbersome and there was power in how he was having Emmett hang on every word he said, but not enough that he actually found it a route he wanted to go down more often.

'You're playing with fire and Hannibal will kill you,' Abigail sang-song at him in the back of the car later. She had been missing most of the night. So much for moral support. Disappearing into the dark shadows of the closed parts of the museum. Maybe it had been for the best. He hadn't wanted her to actually see him with Emmett, less for him to explain. He didn't want to explain shit to her. He didn't want to explain shit to anybody, except for possibly Anthony, who knew exactly what he was up to.

'No, he won't. We're bonded. The only time he's ever threatened to kill me he didn't go through with it.'

She actually seemed surprised, turning on him with those big blue eyes. 'When did he threaten to kill you?'

'Last year when everything happened.' Will waved a vague hand at his midsection. ' I threatened to kill him too, so it's fair.'

She laughed. 'You would, I bet you would.'

'Not anymore. No word of this to him, alright? We keep it quiet.'

'Will—'

'I'm dealing with it. We're dealing with it together.' He held her hand lightly in the back of the car, squeezing her cold fingers between his own.

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'Why didn't you tell me?'

Gabe was on the phone as Will trudged through the back garden with the dogs. He'd just finished walking them but he was now invested in the selection of familiar cars lining the driveway. He walked around the outside of the house, along the side where Hannibal's men met and were meeting now. Hannibal had gathered half a dozen of the men while Will walked his dogs, their baby strapped close to his chest.

'Tell you what?' Gabe had been sullen when Will called him, one-word responses that Will presumed was typical of a regular teenager, but had never been the case with his son.

'That you fucking bonded with Hannibal.'

‘Uh.’ Will licked his lips. ‘To bond you have to go into heat and as I’m, uh, your mother, I didn’t think you’d want to know.’

There was a solemn pause on the other end, before a familiar laugh flooded his ears, the atmosphere breaking. ‘Yeah, I probably wouldn’t want to know that. Are you pregnant?’

‘Jesus, Gabe.’ Will laughed, even as he eyed the cars pulled neatly into the driveway. All of them. All the guys that had their feet under their table and Will didn’t get a look in anymore. ‘I think I’m done having kids, so no. I better not be.’

‘My step mom wants more, but I found dad’s *special pills* because he can’t get it up anymore so good luck with that.’ He laughed brightly, so much so that Will could hardly believe that only five minutes ago his kid was screaming at him.

‘Like Viagra?’ Will said, remembering the little alpha and omega Gabe had for siblings. His mind caught on something.

‘Yeah, but alphas can’t take the usual stuff. The side effects, you know.’

‘No,’ Will admitted. ‘Sex-ed was nonexistent for me.’

‘Well I exist so yeah I figured,’ another tease. This time Will laughed along, even as he watched Randall leaving the side door and heading to his car with the asshole that Will had beaten with the baby monitor. Neither one looked all that happy.

‘Why can’t alphas take it?’

‘Painful knots and shit,’ Gabe said and then paused. ‘Hey mom, you want me to get some for Lecter for the next time he pisses you off?’

‘No, but—’ an idea formed in Will’s mind and god, he knew he was a terrible parent and that this might come under the umbrella of drug dealing, *and* that he was trying to break Gabe out of his previous dealings. ‘—I’m doing something for someone. A work thing. Do you think you could get me some of the regular kind? Beta Viagra? Not the stuff for alphas.’

‘Oh fuck,’ Gabe laughed, first like he wasn’t sure Will was serious. ‘You gone from like beating people’s asses to doping them up?’

‘I’m not sure yet.’ The men were piling out and Will walked the side of the house, hand cupped over the phone. ‘I’m sorry I never told you we bonded. It doesn’t change how I feel about you. I should have… But I should let you go. Behave yourself. Yeah? Call me tomorrow.’

Will hung up, looking behind him as the dogs ambled their way toward the kitchen door. He skated the perimeter of the house, fingers curling around Greta’s head when she fussed. He shushed her, flattening himself to the side of the house, just beneath the window of the office. He could sense Hannibal, even when he couldn’t see him.

‘Don’t you think he’s become more and more of a liability? You need to keep him away.’ Tobias was talking at Hannibal in that way he always did. Where he was continually

uninterested in any response that didn't match his own opinion. A lot like Hannibal, really. Will could feel Hannibal's amusement, sense it somewhere in the back of his mind. Made a smile peel on his own lips even when he bristled at Tobias' words. 'Was it wise to bond with him?'

'Will is his own man, Tobias. I will not stop him reacting as he sees fit, I never have before.'

'You're playing with fire, Lecter. You're going to get burned.'

'They want rid of me,' Will said, when Hannibal found him in the living room a half hour later. He took a seat beside him and Will absorbed that new flood of relief that filled him every time they were close enough to touch. Greta was wide eyed at his feet and looking way too bright for this time of night. 'What do you have to say about that?'

'I have fired the young man you attacked. Tobias will help Randall find a suitable replacement, but nobody is particularly happy with having you around. Even more so now we are bonded. I'm sure you were aware of their opinions before you started lurking beneath the windows.'

'You could sense me?'

'Yes.' When Hannibal smiled, his eyes glimmered in Will's direction. 'They all think me lovesick.'

'Hm. Or they think this—' Will wiggled his finger between the two of them, '—makes you weak and gives an opportunity for one of your enemies to strike.'

'There is that.'

'Do you think it makes you weak?'

'No, but it has caused a lot of discomfort among my men. I'm happy to play the fool for them, so to speak. Just to see what happens.'

'That's very vague, Hannibal.'

'You seem happy.' Hannibal changed the subject so obviously that Will did nothing but stare at him. Still, he laid his hand out against his thigh, waiting for Hannibal to curl his fingers around it. 'How is Gabe?'

'He was upset for about two seconds because I never told him we bonded, then he got over.' Will didn't explain the part about his kid procuring Viagra for him. He wasn't interested in a lecture.

'Why didn't you?'

'I never want to discuss anything that might upset him. Even if not telling him would cause upset. I can't risk losing him. We barely mention what happened last year… he helped kill Verger.'

‘The world is all the better for his actions.’

‘Yeah,’ Will said. ‘Maybe.’

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Will was sitting on a bench outside the hospital. It was opposite a patch of green where visitors sprawled and staff took their breaks. It was far more pleasant than the white-washed walls of the examination room he’d spent the previous forty-five minutes. Greta had screamed her head off all morning during the earmold fitting. She was generally such a good baby, he always felt utterly judged when she succumbed to tears. Which he got, he also wouldn’t want a stranger poking around in his ears, but still. He’d felt burning eyes on everyone they passed as she howled in disgrace.

She had calmed down now they were outside, and it was just the two of them. It was cooler than it had been, and he drank bottled water as she looked up at him from the stroller. He signed *happy?* And watched her peel a gummy smile back at him. He noticed a few tiny white nubs protruding from the bottom as he stroked her cheek and smiled back.

‘Will?’

He turned to the sound of his name. Alana Bloom stood in front of him, hair tumbling over her shoulders. She was in a light jacket, a nice dress. She looked pretty, but then she always had.

‘Hi.’

‘Who’s this?’ she said, peering into the stroller at Greta, who laughed up at her, the trauma of the appointment now forgotten with the promise of new attention. She was, Will thought, Hannibal’s daughter through and through.

‘This is Greta,’ Will said, watching as Alana waved a small hand at his daughter, who gripped at her fingers tightly. He hadn’t thought he’d ever see his former psychiatrist again. Not after their final parting, or the betrayal that stung far more than he would ever be willing to let on. He knew she had quit her job on campus; Abigail saw a different psychiatrist these days. ‘Do you work here?’

‘No. I have an appointment at the clinic.’ She took a seat beside him, eyes moving from Greta, still babbling in the stroller to Will. There was a lot hiding in the softness of her face, her smile genuine. ‘I’m pregnant.’

‘Wow. Okay. Congratulations.' Mason had been fixated on an inheritance. On an heir. Ideally one that Will would be willing to carry, but Alana was married to his sister. Still Will was a little shocked. ‘A Verger baby?’

‘Mason had some of his sperm on ice.’ Alana wasn’t looking at him, probably aware that Mason had more than likely planned on using said sperm on Will. It made the whole thing feel a little more incestuous than he’d like. Still, he gave her a tight smile, looking just past her shoulder.

‘Congratulations.’

‘Thank you.’ She paused, turning again to look at Greta. ‘I remember the first time we met at your house. You were so determined to do things your way.’

‘Still am.’ Another tight grin as he remembered all the clandestine meetings. How he had hidden the pregnancy until the moment that Hannibal had found out for himself. ‘Feels like a lifetime ago.’

‘You and Hannibal?’

‘Newly bonded. Married as long as she’s been alive. He’s still possessive, I’m still flighty. It works for the most part.’

‘You’re married.’

‘Hm. Got hitched in the hospital chapel. Think I was still high on the drugs from labour. We were supposed to be taking it slow, but we didn’t. We weren’t even close to being a thing, but then we had a kid and now… here we are.’

‘Congratulations then.’ Her tone was kind and without judgement and he chanced a look at her face. She was smiling down at him. Nothing hidden.

‘Yeah.’ Will accepted it. Hannibal wanted another celebration. Will had taken away the chance for a wedding, but he knew enough to know bonding ceremonies were a thing. A celebration for the true bond between alpha and omega. Will wasn’t interested.

‘So what are you doing here?’ she asked, perhaps relieved he was no longer spitting venom in her direction. That there was enough space under the bridge for the water to travel freely.

‘She needs new earmolds for her hearing aids.’ Will didn’t bring it up with everyone. People stared when they noticed the tiny little devices in Greta’s ears, but he was still trying to navigate what exactly having a deaf child meant; what it would mean for her future. ‘Everyone says it’s not my fault, but I didn’t exactly look after myself when I was pregnant. So I’m probably to blame.’

‘How bad is it?’

‘Moderate to severe in her left. Severe to profound in her right. Hannibal is looking into the cochlear implant, but I don’t know. I thought my biggest worry would be her inheriting our flaws, but I think I just want to her have as best a life as possible. Whatever that means.’

Alana nodded, always so understanding. Probably wishing deep down for a child healthier than his own. Although whatever flaws the kid could inherit from Mason were far worse than any he or Hannibal would pass on. Will was almost certain.

‘Are you happy?’ No one had asked him that. Hannibal humoured his worst moments, everyone else mostly put up with him because they were too scared of Hannibal to go against it. He’d lived solitary for so long, and he *was* a nightmare.

‘I’m the happiest I’ve ever been, I think. I’m not satisfied, but I’m happy.’ The words were true as he spoke them. Once this deal with Emmett was done, once he proved to Hannibal he could be trusted again, maybe things would change. He would make sure they would. ‘I’ve always been good at adapting. Poor kid to cop. Cop to… manager. Manager to omega. It’s just the next stage.’

They spoke a little while longer. Or at least Alana asked him questions, and he answered, much as he had in their previous life. It was easy. She had always made it easy to talk to her. A kindness that he could see even through the betrayal that had blinded him. She was trying too hard, trying to pave over the damage caused last year, but he let her continue, enjoying the company of someone that saw him as something better than he had ever been.

Chapter End Notes

Depending on my ability to edit, next part might be the last (or I'll chop it in half...we'll see :))

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will's phone rang in his pocket not long after Alana left. He sighed, rubbing as his forehead again and ignoring Greta's giggle as he pulled his phone from his pocket, exasperated.

'Will, it's Randall. I'm so sorry. I fucked up.'

'What is it?' Will stood, stomach sinking, hands grabbing onto the stroller at quick speed as he moved his way through the park and to the parking lot.

'You got Kenny fired.' Kenny, Will presumed, was the guy that caused Will to break the baby monitor. 'He got mad. Told his friends and uh. They got Hannibal.'

'What do you mean they got Hannibal?' Hannibal was a hard man to get. Will wouldn't want to take him in a fight and he sure as fuck wouldn't go easy, not unless he wanted to be taken.

'They T-Boned his vehicle. Grabbed him from the wreck. They sent a video said they want money or they're going to hand him over to whoever pays the most. I know where he is… they forgot to turn of GPS.'

'Just fucking tell me,' Will said, ignoring the look he got from a passing couple, eyeing his words, as if his foul language would affect his daughter. Will asked for details, and told Randall to meet him there, driving as fast as he could without getting pulled over. It was always an abandoned warehouse. *Always.* Maybe Hannibal should invest in the area, or buy out the security company that supposedly guarded the old buildings. Will put the thought to the back of his mind as he swallowed down his anxiety.

Greta was asleep in her carrier by the time Will rolled up. He pulled on his leather gloves, the ones he still kept in the glove compartment. Pulling them on helped him refocus, helped ground him in the idea that he was here, ready to do something Hannibal had trained him up to do. Something that he was good at.

'Greta's asleep. She's going to stay that way. You fucking hear me? You're staying with her. If anything happens, I swear I'll fucking kill you, Tier. I don't give a fuck.'

'I know.' Tier's lips drew in a line, as if he was aware how badly he had fucked up. It was the middle of the day. Will knew only an idiot would take Hannibal in the middle of the day. Opportunists, small time wannabe gangsters that didn't know any better and were absolutely guaranteed to get themselves killed with or without Will's help.

Will drew his gun as he rounded the corner, rolling his neck from side to side to loosen his muscles. Shoulders back. Footsteps slow, as silent as he could make them. He preferred to attack at night, but these were the dumbasses that chose a Thursday afternoon to try and make

a victim out of Hannibal Lecter. That he had willingly allowed himself to be taken was another matter entirely.

Two men were both bent over a laptop when Will rounded the corner. Neither of them were "Kenny" but he didn't recognise them. Will couldn't see the screen, but he guessed they were waiting for money to drop, wired over for the release of Hannibal. They didn't hear Will, not really, he could tell it was his scent they picked up on first. Fucking alphas.

'Which one of you wants to get shot first?' Will said. One kid fell from his chair, the other raised his hands immediately.

'I thought you retired? You're his omega, right?' The one on the floor said, scrambling away when Will lowered his gun in his direction. 'Kenny said that Randall said you didn't work for him anymore even though you want to. We didn't touch him, that was someone else. We're just here to release the footage, to advertise where he is and what price.'

'Fuck whatever Randall said. Or Kenny. What the fuck are you playing at?'

'We just want a cut,' the kid said, faking bravado that he pulled from God knows where. 'Come on. Lecter can let a few more of us in, right? Just pay us the money and we won't hand him over.'

Will laughed, because he couldn't actually believe he was having to deal with this. This was juvenile shit and way beneath his level of engagement. 'Have you advertised his whereabouts yet?'

The boys both started talking in unison, but Will felt a tug in his navel, his skin prickling. Hannibal was close. Hannibal needed him. Hannibal Hannibal Hannibal. *Alpha alpha alpha*. It was a chant in his head that he couldn't switch off.

'I'm not fucking dealing with this,' Will said, and shot the kid on the ground in the kneecap. Will watched him cry out and felt a pinch of something in his chest that he drowned out with his own voice. 'Have you sold him out?'

'Oh god. Not yet.' The smell of piss burned Will's nostrils, and he noticed the guy standing up was shaking like a leaf and standing in a pool of his own urine. Jesus. They weren't cut out for anything close to this lifestyle. That Kenny had enlisted them was tantamount to his own failings, too. That Randall had such poor taste in friends. Well, Will didn't want to think about that. He preferred it when he thought he didn't have any friends other that Matthew, who was long dead.

'You're a kid so you're not getting one in the brain yet. You come near Hannibal again and I change my mind. Delete the fucking footage.' They were barely older than Gabe, Will had to remind himself, and his kid was also a huge idiot too. He waved his gun towards the boy standing in his piss and gestured at him to help his friend. 'Get him out of here. Any word of this to anyone and I will come after you.'

'Yes sir,' the other one said. He looked close to darting and leaving his gasping friend on the ground before Will told him to help him out. Will grabbed the laptop, hitching it under one

arm before he followed where his body was taking him.

Will found Hannibal in the next room over. He was tied to a chair, not unlike Will had been when he was at Verger's. His head calmed at the sight of him, placid and tethered, even as distress spiked at his nerves.

'I won't tell anyone you got beat up by a group of nerds,' Will said, mind clouding with the scent of his alpha. His alpha in pain, bleeding. He wanted to lean his head in Hannibal's lap, wanted to hold him close and shield him from further attack.

'Ah. Hello darling,' Hannibal said. His mouth sounded wet with blood and he cleared his throat, leaning his head into Will's open hands. There was a nasty cut over his temple, one below his jaw, and he was holding his shoulder at an odd angle. Will presumed a fracture. 'How did the appointment go?'

'Don't worry about it.'

He had more important things to do, like get them out of here. He knelt in front of Hannibal, his gloved fingers pushing back his hair. He took in his wounds, mostly superficial. They'd hit him with something hard, but there were no bruises on or around his hands. Nothing defensive. Will curled his hands around his head, smoothing his hair back, wondering why he didn't fight back.

'I've got you,' Will said, lifting so that he could press Hannibal's face into his neck.

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Will had known there was something off the moment he had seen Hannibal tied to the chair. It was too *basic*. Hannibal had the look of a gentleman dandy, but he was all muscle beneath the well-tailored suits, and he could, and Will had seen him, dish out pain far quicker than it took Will to peel his blade from its sheath. Hannibal was brutal, quick thinking and sadistic. He was not a man you calmly kidnapped and tied to a chair unless he wanted to be there.

'Why did you let them take you?' He asked, ignoring the fact that it wouldn't have happened in the first place if Will was in charge. Hannibal sat propped up in soft clothes in his favoured armchair as Will paced in front of him. They'd called a doctor out to see to his dislocated shoulder, to clean up his bruises. Will had been quiet until this point.

'Because I knew Randall would panic and call you. I told you I was letting them think I'd become weak with love.'

'But why?'

'Because I think it's time for a reshuffle. Family comes first. There's no reason we shouldn't run things together.' Hannibal paused, a flinch of discomfort on his face that Will stroked away with the back of his hand as he stepped closer. 'I have tried to keep you separate, for my sake, and not just yours. I held the idea of family as something to be locked away. After Mischa was killed. I cannot abide the idea of similar happening to Greta or you.'

‘How will anything bad ever happen to Greta when I’m her father?’ Will said, smiling when that raised a lightness to Hannibal’s harsh face. ‘She’s protected in ways that Mischa never was.’

‘You’re correct.’ Hannibal’s lips peeled forward into a tight pout. Even now, he disliked speaking of his sister’s death.

‘Why didn’t you listen to me when I said I wanted us to do this together?’

‘You were not my bondmate at the time and you were increasingly paranoid about the club.’

‘Why can’t you just say these things. Why did you have to put yourself through this? You’re not getting any younger. It might take you longer to recover.’ Hannibal’s severe expression softened and he leaned his head into his Will’s open hands.

‘I’ve found most of my men respond far better to actions rather than words.’ Will could feel his discomfort, could sense it in his mind, and he sighed. If soothing Hannibal would stop him clouding up Will’s thoughts, he was all for it. He grabbed Hannibal’s wrist and pressed it to his lips, inhaling his scent. ‘When you have finished playing with Emmett, I will allow you closer access. Abigail too.’

‘Thank you,’ Will said, appeased. He smiled and then stepped away, thinking about what he wanted to do next. ‘I called your office. They’re not expecting you in for the week. I don’t want you in the office until your levels come down.’

Hannibal had always been far more willing to do as Will wanted than the other way around, so he simply nodded his head at Will. ‘I shall defer to the expert.’

‘I’ll handle what needs to be done, for now.’ He smiled at Hannibal, and then waited until he received another one back before he took three steps forward, until he knelt right in front of where Hannibal was sitting. Will rarely spent time on his knees for Hannibal. Hannibal had always been so easy with his mouth, but it came harder to Will. It felt subordinate and he *felt* so subordinate already. He couldn’t switch his mind off so easily with a throat full of alpha cock. *But* Hannibal maybe deserved it. Will pulled open his loose pants, palming what he found there and flicking his eyes up to read Hannibal’s face.

‘What are you doing down there?’ Hannibal asked, his thumb sliding to press against the centre of Will’s bottom lip, firm enough that Will loosened his jaw, letting it slide inside.

‘Gonna put my mouth on you,’ Will said around Hannibal’s thumb. He pulled his head back so it slid out with a wet sound. ‘Gonna swallow all of you.’

‘Surely not all of me, darling.’ Hannibal’s hand slid around the base of his cock, where his knot would grow.

‘You knot my mouth, I bite your dick off,’ Will warned him, watching the moment where Hannibal wondered whether it would be worth it. Probably not. ‘But otherwise.’

Will took his time. Long slow kitten-licks up the length, staring up at him beneath fluttering lashes until Hannibal stiffened to full hardness, then he suckled on the head, fingers kneading against the underside in the way he knew Hannibal loved. Pre-come soaked his tongue, salt and musk and the taste of his man in his mouth, the sounds his alpha was making. It was making Will's mouth slick with more saliva.

When Hannibal blew him it was always tight lips and hollowed cheeks and usually three fingers teasing beneath to his cunt. But Will didn't have an alpha cock, and he needed to hold on to the base of Hannibal with his fingers to make sure all of him was getting a good work over. He spat down onto Hannibal's cock, ignored the grunt of disgust from Hannibal and used his hand to spread his spit over the thick length of his cock.

'I'll look after you,' Will told him as he pulled away. His lips felt red and swollen and when he looked up at Hannibal, he saw the utter lack of composure on his face. Hannibal threw his head back so all Will could see what the arch of his throat, how he swallowed when Will moved to bob his head once then twice, letting Hannibal use the hot tight channel of his mouth.

'I'm yours now. You can have my body, my mind. Let me look after you and what we do. All of it.' Will squeezed his hand tight around the base of Hannibal's cock, staving off his orgasm until Hannibal rolled his head forward so they were looking at each other.

His hand fell to Will's head, pushing back wayward curls before gripping tight. The pinch of tension across his scalp had Will twitching in his own jeans, but he ignored his own arousal for the time being.

'Anything you want,' Hannibal said, eyes clouded with *want* and Will felt almost sick with power. Something that he never felt down on his knees. He leaned forward, loosened his grip and slowly engulfed Hannibal into the slick heat of his mouth again. He let Hannibal guide him with the hand in his hair, so that he could fuck up into Will's mouth, the sounds of his gasping, the obscene wet sounds as it slid over Will's tongue and how he moaned every time he felt it slide deeper.

Hannibal didn't need to warn Will he was coming. He was in his head, and he could feel it so intimately. He felt him stiffen and then the flood in his mouth, coating the back of his throat. Will pulled off, swallowing what he could, letting what he couldn't drip down over his lips.

Afterward, he climbed onto Hannibal's lap, not needing him to return the favour but allowing the scent of him, the weight of him over Hannibal's lap to soothe.

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Four days later and there was a clattering noise from somewhere downstairs. Will heard it first, somewhere buried deep in his sleeping subconscious. He rolled over, face into the pillow, left side of his body pressed against Hannibal, body heat shared beneath the sheets. He blinked; the house was silent enough that he was certain he'd imagined it.

Then the dogs started. They were still a little edgy from the move, unused to their new surroundings and Will was used to them causing a fuss most nights. When there was another

loud noise, and they continued, Will sat up in the bed, blinking in the darkness as he pulled open the drawer to the nightstand. He had a gun taped up to the underside, and he moved to grab it when Hannibal dissuaded him, a gentle hand wrapped over his shoulder.

‘I should go,’ Hannibal said, already throwing the sheets away from himself. In his hand glinted a knife. There was a pause, but Will relented, pulling his hand away. Will had been Hannibal’s protector, the one that moved in and out of the shadows. But Hannibal was his alpha now, everything in his body would tell him to protect. ‘May I suggest you check on Greta?’

Greta was still asleep in the crib, undisturbed as she was when she didn’t have her hearing aids in. Will rested his fingers lightly on her chest, feeling her little breaths as she slept soundly. Will felt an eerie sense of calm as he stepped out of his daughter’s bedroom and walked down the stairs. The dogs had stopped barking and he could hear two familiar voices, his chest immediately warming at the sound.

Hannibal was standing in the kitchen, face blank, though his eyes appeared irate. Opposite him was Gabe, clothes crumpled, his hair rumpled. Will moved to him immediately, curling a hand over his shoulder, pulling at his face so that he could see it in the moonlight. Breathing in his scent.

‘I don’t have a key,’ Gabe explained, eyes on Will and not Hannibal. ‘Sorry.’

‘No,’ Hannibal said. ‘What a surprise this is. Perhaps we should be grateful that your sister’s poor hearing means she remains undisturbed.’

‘Hannibal,’ Will warned, feeling that odd pull. Alpha son and alpha mate, but no relation to each other. It was an odd feeling, unpleasant, worse now that Hannibal was his mate. He felt everything so physically and knew that the two would never get along perfectly. ‘Gabe, you’re supposed to be at school.’

‘I shall give you both some privacy,’ Hannibal said, and Will waited until he heard footsteps rising on the stairs and their bedroom door closing before he pressed for an answer.

‘I got suspended again and dad got mad.’

‘What happened?’ Will looked to his son with unease. Abigail had been troubled, but it had been easy to just pick her up from wherever she’d sulked off to and take her back after a time. Gabe seemed brittle, more stubborn. A bad mix of his parents.

‘They’re all a bunch of cocksuckers. I said I didn’t want to go back there. Why can’t I stay here?’

Will paused, biting on his bottom lip as he took in his son staring at him. ‘You want to live with me and Hannibal?’

There were good schools in the area. Will knew that was one reason Hannibal had picked this place to move to. There was a private school, the best in the State, not ten minutes away, and

he only had to finish the year off before he was heading for college. He'd get in with his father's links no matter his grades.

'Can I?'

'I don't know,' Will admitted honestly. 'I'm not unmated anymore. Hannibal is my registered alpha, and he's a powerful man. If that's really what you want and you promise to behave, then I think we could work something out. I might have to talk to your dad.'

'Hannibal hates me.'

'If Hannibal hated you, you would be dead but you're not so he doesn't,' Will said. He couldn't stop touching Gabe. His shoulder, his arm, the side of his face. He had no right, no right at all and yet Gabe was here, had come to him rather than anyone else. 'But don't be an asshole to him and don't call him grandad. He doesn't like rudeness.'

Gabe scoffed, 'You're rude to him. Abigail says he likes that.'

'Don't listen to what Abigail says either. I'll uh. I'll call your dad tomorrow and we'll see what we can do. Are you hungry? I can cook you something.' Will faltered, unsure if he should agree to anything. He had no rights, none really. He gave them up years ago.

'It's like two-AM,' Gabe pointed out, but Will shrugged.

'I can do eggs.' He smiled when Gabe did, nodding his head. 'Sit down. Tell me what happened.'

'And that will make you happy?' Hannibal asked when Will crawled back into the bed beside him and explained what had happened. Greta was asleep on his chest, his large hand cupped behind her back as he listened. Will curled up beside him and stroked his hair back, kissed his cheek where the bruises had turned sallow. He was being amenable. Wasn't sure whether it was because he was omega, or because he knew it would work.

'Yes.'

Hannibal nodded his head in acceptance. 'There will be rules. Reputation is important, Will. You know this, he needs to learn it too.'

'I know. I've told him no smoking in the house.'

'Or the car. Any of the cars,' Hannibal said, but he was softening like Will knew he would. He mouthed at his throat to inhale his scent and settle himself.

'Thank you.'

‘Would you like me to talk to his father?’ Hannibal said the next morning. They were the only two up, but Will was allowing him into the office. To attend meetings in the morning, before he was escorted back home again. Will would call to check up.

‘Why because you’re my alpha and I can’t handle things alone? If that’s where you’re going with it, you can shut the hell up.’

‘I was only thinking that you haven’t seen him since you were fifteen and—’

‘Nineteen. I was nineteen,’ Will said, correcting Hannibal before looking away. ‘Found him when I wanted to get Gabe back.’

‘He refused, I suppose.’

‘He said he would only think about it if I did something for him and having already done that *something* with him and knowing that he was deceptive about his intentions, I knew it wouldn’t get me anywhere.’

‘Then I think I should speak to him,’ Hannibal said. ‘He may respond better to your alpha.’

‘Fuck off.’ There was little heat in Will’s words as he twisted his fingers around the tea bag in his mug. ‘I can handle it. Please remember that. Remember I’m really good at handling people that piss me off.’

‘Well, don’t kill him at least. Not in the house anyway.’

‘I wouldn’t,’ Will agreed. ‘I’m not touching any of them for Gabe’s sake, but I can still scare him.’

Gabe sat close to Will when he came down for breakfast. Greta was on the floor - something he only did when Hannibal was out of the way - and squealing softly as Buster tried to drop a ball at her feet, expecting her to play fetch. Buster hadn’t quite mastered the understanding that Greta could do nothing but squeal excitedly at him.

‘You’ve never told me and I’ve never asked, but I have a right to know,’ Gabe said, elbow to elbow with Will. God, it was soothing to have his kids nearby. The scent of the two of them, both happy to be with him, Will had no idea it could ever be like that.

‘You want to know why I gave you up,’ Will said, whistling for Buster to stop pestering Greta. The little dog ran around the baby to paw at Will’s legs instead, and he indulged, rubbing between his ears and fussing him until he ran off to pester the other dogs.

‘Yeah.’

‘We were poor. We didn’t have any money. Your grandparents said they would take you if you were an alpha. I didn’t… I didn’t want that, but I didn’t have a choice. I told my dad I wanted to keep you, but they took you from me in the hospital. Didn’t get to say goodbye. Thought I’d never see you again.’ It came out in one stuttered sentence. The anger was still there, the pain bubbling in his chest, but he swallowed it down.

‘They said you didn’t want me.’

‘They lied.’ Will rubbed a hand over his face. ‘I’m sorry that they lied to you about it.’

Gabe was silent for a few minutes as he took it in. Will knew he had been lucky to have such an understanding kid, that one day he would probably have to answer for his actions a little more seriously, once the honeymoon period of their reunion was over. For now, Will would give his son whatever he wanted.

‘Hey, I got what you asked for,’ Gabe said eventually, clearing the quiet atmosphere. His eyes were red, and he couldn’t quite meet Will’s, but that didn’t matter. His hand slid into the front pocket of his jeans and he pulled out a clear baggie, a handful of tiny blue pills sitting inside. ‘Who are they for?’

‘Just some man. Something I’m working on with Hannibal.’

‘Could I work for Hannibal one day?’ Gabe asked and it was so straightforward, but Will wanted to laugh. Only last year Abigail had been begging for the same thing. Will liked the idea of it more than he was willing to let on. He rubbed at his son’s back, between his shoulder-blades, laughing softly.

‘Maybe, if you still want to once you’ve finished college.’

‘I thought his father was coming to speak to you both today,’ Hannibal said that evening, aware that no such plan had been put in action. He stared at Hannibal, who knew exactly what he was doing. He stared back at Will, sipping his coffee. When Will had brought up the need to call his father to Gabe, Gabe had said he’d deal with it instead. A protective edge to his voice.

‘I already told Mo—Will. His flight gets in at 10 tomorrow morning, but he’s playing golf with some dude. Do you do that? Do you play golf in neat argyle and sweaters and talk about “business?”’ Gabe teased, but his laughter didn’t quite reach his eyes and Will was drawn to the furrowed nature of his brow.

‘I do not play golf,’ Hannibal said coolly. ‘Shall you be seeing him here?’

‘No. I think I’ll go to him.’ Will scooped a mouthful of peas into Greta’s mouth, ignoring the tension in his stomach. ‘Where is he playing golf?’

‘Um.’ Gabe looked between the two of them, cautious. ‘Are you going to kill him or some shit?’

‘Nope, I’m going to talk to him like a grown fucking adult. Don’t worry, I’ll behave if he behaves. We’re both adults now.’

Will could feel nerves rattling around his chest, somewhere between apprehension and excitement. Made his heart flutter and his fingers twitch over his knees. He'd been sitting in the parking lot for twenty-five minutes, staring at the entrance to the golf course. Will was fairly certain this was the type of establishment that wouldn't allow omegas onto their course without their alpha present, so he just sat on the hood of John's rental and waited for him to arrive.

He spotted John first, leaving through the mouth of the entrance with his buddies, golf cart bag hitched over the shoulder of his expensive polo shirt as he headed toward his car. Will sat upright on the hood of the car, trying to clear his head. There was the natural pause when John stood in front of him. His eyes drew down to Will with caution. They hadn't seen each other in around fifteen years.

'Will Graham,' John said, and Will picked up on the caution in his voice. 'Congratulations. I heard you finally mated.'

'Thank you,' Will said, just as sweetly back. He noticed the men still hovering, all alphas, although their scents no longer bothered him as they did before. 'We need to talk.'

He watched the performance of John saying goodbye. He pulled the white cap from his head and mopped his brow with the back of his wrist; the Rolex glinting in the sun. He'd lost some of his good looks; his hair had thinned, his once square jaw had sagged into the first sign of jowls, and despite being ten years younger, he looked a lot less athletic than Hannibal did.

'I was on my way to pick Gabe up.'

'After your golf session.' Will didn't move from his perch on the hood, but he took in a deep breath when the anger tried to overwhelm him. Years of pent up bitterness and grief at being denied what he had wanted, or maybe being poorer for it, but knowing he could have given Gabe so much more affection than what he'd received in the years they were separated.

'What do you want, Will?'

'Gabe is going to be staying with me and Hannibal now. We can get him transferred so he can finish school. Get him ready for college.'

'Hannibal Lecter, huh? Playing mommy and daddy with Baltimore's shadiest businessman? You think I don't know the deals that Hannibal gets away with. You think I don't know exactly what happened last year to our kid and how it was all *your* fault.'

'Some of it was my fault, yeah,' Will admitted easily, not cowed even when John stepped so close that their knees brushed. Will remembered John's laughter in his ear as he knotted him all those years ago, how he had felt cheap and foolish and even worse two months later when he was pissing on a stick in a gas station's filthy restroom. 'He wants to live with us and I'm tired of sending him back to you when he's so fucking miserable.'

John looked at him for a moment. Will didn't think for a second that he had done very much of the child-rearing. His parents had raised Gabe and then when he was old enough he was

shipped off to boarding school like all the best rich kids. Their kid was vibrant and stupid and painfully young, and Will wouldn't have him getting hurt like this anymore.

'You know, Will? You smell just as good as you did back then, but I never could work you out. Wouldn't look me in the eye until you were squirming on my cock. Do you remember that? Is that why you're here now? So I can fuck you in the back of this car?'

'I didn't come here to reminisce.' Will hefted himself up from the hood of the car. He pushed John away and stared down at the golf clubs still resting beside the car. 'I came to tell you that Gabe isn't going home with you. You're going to go home to your wife and your kids and you're going to let him stay where he wants.'

'Nah. You don't get to decide that.' Will never forgot that most alphas weren't like Hannibal, who found Will's resistance to rules and hierarchy amusing. He felt fingers clamp around his wrist, pulling him back. The parking lot was mostly deserted, a few stray stragglers near the entrance, but they were hidden by the other side of the car - which was large and mostly blocked them from sight. John's friends had long since departed, picking up on the awkwardness. 'You're the same omega bitch you were when you sold our kid. I fucking own him and you have nothing to say in the matter. Understand?'

Fingers pressed tight against bone, grinding it down, and Will heard the pained noise escape between gritted teeth even when he swallowed it down. Will rooted himself to the floor, swinging his free hand toward the golf clubs. He pulled one out and lunged it behind himself. Metal connected with jaw and he heard John cry out in shock as he let go of Will.

'You don't fucking touch me.' Will said, turning to see John with his hand over his face. There was a cut on his cheek where the club had connected. Will stared at him for a few seconds, feeling the adrenaline circulate before he whipped the club over his shoulder and brought it down behind John's knee.

John was caught off balance, falling to the ground face first. Will leaned down, one hand fisted in the back of his scalp, yanking him upwards as he ground his knee into his knuckles. John cried out and Will just laughed, lips down low.

'You don't fucking touch me and you don't fucking touch Gabe again. You lay a hand on him and I'll kill you. Don't think that I won't. Do you understand?'

'You're a fucking crazy bitch.'

'Yeah, well, you shouldn't have fucked me then,' Will said. He yanked his head back further and waited for John to gasp before he asked again, 'You go home and your fucking family leaves us the hell alone. Understood?'

'Shit. Yeah. Alright.'

'Go home to your wife,' Will said, loosening his fist from John's hair and removing his knee from his hand. He stood up, looking down at the man on the ground. He hadn't touched anyone like that in forever, and he could feel his heart beating fast in his chest, his skin prickled and flushed. 'Gabe will message you if he wants to. Fuck off out of our lives.'

‘Dad said I can stay here,’ Gabe said when Will found him in the living room after he’d driven home, cell phone in his hand as if he’d only just come off the phone with him. There was a look in his eye, like he wanted to know more. Will refused to meet his gaze. The adrenaline had only just left his body, though he presumed Gabe could pick it up in his scent.

‘We’ll get you into the school. You have to behave,’ he said. ‘No more bullshit.’

‘What the fuck did you say to him?’ Gabe asked, his smile wide and splitting his youthful face into a bright thing. Will couldn’t help smiling back, heart jolting.

‘I can be persuasive. We’ll see if we can get your stuff sent down here. Alright?’

Gabe nodded his head, his eyes softer and almost damp. ‘Alright.’

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Will told himself it was just part of his grand planning coming together when he realised Abigail was on the phone to Hannibal in a panicked state. Abigail always called Will normally, mostly because there was an element of fear she always held onto with Hannibal, the man who had killed her father. She called Will when she needed money or was lonely, or just needed general help. She called Hannibal when she was in genuine trouble and knew that Will would cuss her out for it.

‘What has she done?’ He asked the moment Hannibal ended the call. He’d followed him into his office, screaming baby included. Greta was fussy and teething and screamed to high fucking heaven whenever Will put her down or tried to hand her off to someone else. She was still grizzling when he held her in his now aching arms, but it was better than before. Her face was damp in the crook of his neck.

‘Unfortunately, I believe she has discovered that journalists are far more lecherous than she first realised and that stringing an alpha one along has not worked to her benefit.’

‘She wants to write about you,’ Will said, pointing out the obvious.

‘Yes, she does. I’ll sort it out,’ Hannibal said, as if in this moment he was Will’s boss and not his mate. ‘Don’t worry.’

‘I’m not worried.’ A plan formed in Will’s mind. Lounds would leave them be if there was a better story. Will could give her a better story. ‘Leave it to me, Hannibal. I’ll deal with it.’

‘If you think so.’ The smirk creeping into the corner’s of Hannibal’s mouth lead Will to believe he knew exactly what the plan was.

Will had Abigail and Freddie meet him in Wolf Trap the same night he’d taken Emmett up on his offer to tour his small yacht he housed just off Fells Point. It was the night that everything would fall into place; Emmett would try to dig his claws in, and Will would bite back.

It saddened Will to be back in Wolf Trap. He hadn't been able to face it after his heat. He'd bought the house as his little hideout from the world. He had conceived his daughter in it, planned to raise her here, bound himself to Hannibal in the only heat he had ever shared with another. It was… a house that held a lot of memories for him. But it was time to move on.

Or it was time to meet Abigail and Freddie somewhere that didn't feel as intimate as the new home. He didn't want a journalist poking around where there were personal, sentimental and possibly incriminating items around, not when they were trying to discourage her interest.

Abigail looked worried when she saw him, bright blue eyes blinking at him as she walked from the Jeep. He let her fly at him, pulling him down into a hug. 'I got in over my head again, but she knows so much, Will.'

'It's okay,' he said, gritting his teeth and pulling back when he noticed Freddie stepping out of the passenger side, delicate face pointed upwards, pretty and determined beneath her crown of red. He swallowed resentment, running his hand gently up Abigail's arm. 'We're sorting it.'

Sorting it meant Will explaining to Freddie in no uncertain terms what would and wouldn't be happening. He had something better for her, something scandalous that would hit harder than some grubby piece on a Baltimore councilman who, as far as could be proved, was legitimate and welcoming to the girl he supposedly orphaned.

Sorting it meant having Tobias and Freddie in his old house, further tainting the walls with the scent of unwanted alpha. Still, he watched as Freddie signed the agreement. The promise that no words would be spoken about Abigail, Hannibal, Will or their little life they had together.

'This better be worth it, Mr Graham,' she said, turning her wide eyes onto him as Tobias pulled the paperwork toward him, phone already out to confirm with Hannibal.

'It is,' Will said. His eyes focused on her briefly. She looked so goddamn pleased with herself. Will's fingers curled over his own knees, ignoring the frustration he felt towards Abigail. When she graduated, when she came back home *back to the family* he would take her under his wing; make her fierce. Make her realise that her actions would have repercussions she'd have to deal with herself one day.

Will left them in Wolf Trap with Tobias and one of Hannibal's men, an old one that Will trusted because he kept himself out of trouble. Kept his opinions so quiet that Will didn't know a goddamn thing about him. Tonight he would come back and Hannibal would be here and they would lay it all out on the table, everything that Freddie would need.

Back home and it was just Hannibal and Greta, sitting up in the bedroom watching as Will dressed for the evening ahead, well aware that it was all about appearances. Hannibal's bruised face had cleared, although his shoulder was still stiff, and Will could see how it pained him. He soothed it away at night, pressing lips to heated skin, holding him close.

Hannibal was to go to Wolf Trap later. That was the plan. Drive there with Tier, who he still hadn't fired, but once Will had more say, once he finally handed control over to him, he'd be gone. Gabe wasn't involved. He seemed to travel through life with so much ease, and had already made friends at his new school, so was with them for the night. Not *'dealing or doing drugs'* he professed loudly, mostly to Hannibal's benefit before he left for the night, hugging Will before he left.

Things had been relatively settled as they grew into their family unit. Two alphas that were tied only by their association to Will was always going to be awkward, but he sensed they were both *trying*. Or Will just tuned out any arguments. There were a lot of undercutting comments at the dinner table, a lot of Hannibal trying to scent mark him until Will caught on; a lot of Gabe wanting Will to sit up with him way past a reasonable time.

'You look nice,' Hannibal insisted as Will dressed. Will had picked a light grey suit with a plain white shirt, buttoned low. Hannibal was watching him upright in his chair beside the bed and not looking thrilled at Will twisting a watch over his wrist. 'Although I prefer you in dark colours.'

'This isn't about you.'

'Of course not.' Hannibal turned a page in his book, one knee crossed over the other. At his feet Greta was playing with a toy dog, the fluffy tail hanging from her mouth as she looked up at him. 'Shall we discuss the sildenafil you're currently carrying in your breast pocket? Where did you get it from? They don't prescribe to omegas.'

Will said nothing, and in his silence allowed the truth to come forward. 'Don't judge me.'

'Gabriel is certainly resourceful, but I think perhaps we should not encourage his dealings any further.' Hannibal was right, of course, but Will didn't want to give him the satisfaction. He bit the inside of his cheek and refused to look at him. Eventually a warm hand reached out, stroking the small of his back. 'I wish you would allow me to send one of my men with you.'

'I don't need that. Anthony is going to be around.'

'Anthony is not trained to defend himself, let alone you.'

'I'm trained to defend myself. I can protect Anthony.'

'I'd rather you didn't have to.'

Will ignored him, deciding that the same fight wasn't worth having again and again. He bent down and plucked Greta up from the floor, resting her round cheek against his own, breathing in her scent.

'Greta is gonna have a great time with her papa while I do what someone else should have done a while ago.'

'Set a councilman up for his downfall?'

‘Or just finish the job.’ Will smiled when Hannibal’s lips quivered upwards, practically a grin. He dropped Greta down on top of Hannibal and pressed a kiss to the side of his jaw, breathing in the taste of him until it clouded his head a little. ‘I won’t get into too much trouble. Promise, but what about you?’

‘We shall research cochlear implants, and then we shall meet you in Virginia.’

The plan was for Anthony to sit nice and safe in the parking lot, just out of sight of any security cameras. Will could sense the anticipation and panic rolling from Anthony, clouding his scent. Emmett was a sleaze, but he would be easy to overpower if it came to it. That Anthony was worried seemed almost sweet.

If he wasn’t out within the time agreed, then Anthony would call Hannibal, who would send in one of his men, who Will knew was lurking on the periphery; his warning to Hannibal about wanting to do this alone would have gone completely unheard. After Verger, Will knew Hannibal wouldn’t take anymore risks with him. Especially now they were mated.

‘You look a feast tonight,’ Anthony said to him, eyes drawn down over Will’s suit, clearing his throat to smooth out the nerves. Will laughed, looking away, wiping his damp palms over his thighs.

‘Do you want to fuck me or is this all just a joke?’

‘Why can’t it be both?’ Anthony winked and Will felt himself relax slightly. Familiarity was stretching between the two of them, the more time they spent together. Will wouldn’t say he liked the guy, but he was a lot more tolerable than most, and it was sort of good to know of another omega man.

‘I’m pretty basic,’ Will said, joining in but letting him down gently. ‘Just into alphas. Or one, really. Sorry.’

‘It’s quite alright. We’ve already discussed how Hannibal has you well marked as his property.’

‘Fuck that,’ Will said, but he knew it was true.

They sat in the car for a few minutes, going over the plan. Will had a wire attached to the inside of his shirt, recording everything that would happen and Anthony would hear the entire thing. He’d originally planned to use his phone, but if Emmett worked as Hannibal did, they would confiscate it on arrival.

‘Please don’t do anything too rash,’ Anthony said when Will moved to leave. Their eyes met, and Will thought over the comment, wondered whether it was worth another argument with another person about his apparent irrationality. He decided against it. His behaviour would be enough.

Will walked the length of the docks, watching the city lights reflect amber on the black of the water. He stared for a few moments. Another boat with another alpha. He was a long way from the boy he had been, but still the situation rankled and brought back a rush of memories that he'd tried to forget.

Emmett was waiting for him with a flute of champagne in hand when Will found his way onto his boat. Just the one guard. Alpha, but older and tired looking. A little overweight. Wouldn't take much if Will needed to take him out. He stepped outside once Will stepped onto the boat. They would be alone.

'Shall I give you the tour? I know you're fond boats.' A hand to the small of his back pushed Will forward. It moved lower as he guided Will. No preamble then. Will could smell his arousal. Heavy in the air, musky.

Will allowed himself to be gently shown around the yacht. Same brand as the one he'd lost his virginity in. He remembered noticing that he had bled onto the sheets a little, but John had told him it didn't matter. The maids would clean it up. John had gone to hang out with his friends as Will had limped into his worn jeans, no affection left between them. Will tried to swallow the bile down that rose with the memory. It wouldn't do to dwell.

'There's an intimacy I've always enjoyed about boats,' Emmett was speaking loudly, his hand sliding around Will's waist and pushing him through the narrowing towards the back room. He could see the bed, black sheets. As he entered the room, he noticed a video camera propped up, the red light activated.

'No easy escape,' Will said after a time. He pulled away and flashed a nervous smile, wiping his hands over his thighs. The nerves were real. His memory about feeling trapped on boats with overpowered alphas was real. His agency was stronger now. He was stronger now.

'I'm so sorry,' he said, taking a seat on the very edge of the bed, twisting his head so that he wasn't so intoxicated by alpha pheromones. 'I'm sorry I got you involved.'

'I worked hard for you, Will. Looked into those girls, but I think your little surrogate was playing tricks on you.' Emmett took a seat beside him, and then his hand was on Will's knee, spread wide, knuckles dimpled as the fingers stretched over the meat of Will's leg.

'I know.' Will bit his lip, turning so that his neck was bared. In the moonlight that shined through the vessel's small window, Will's scarred throat showed clean. 'She's apologised.'

'It's not a bother. I'm sure there are many ways you can think of making it up to me.' Fingers traced lightly over the scarring, thumbnail catching on the edge, enough for Will to flinch. 'I'm sure you can think of a few.'

'Please. I have Hannibal,' Will said, thinking to the man driving to Virginia now, with their beautiful daughter that Will knew was so like him, even if no one else saw it.

'Hannibal took you in when you'd already been claimed by another. I'm sure he would forgive one more infidelity. Especially as you came to me to protect him. Didn't want him getting caught up with the police. We're all aware what kind of man he is, are we not?'

‘I’m lucky to have him,’ Will said. When damp lips replaced the fingers on his neck, he jumped away, squirming to his feet. ‘Let me make us a drink. You’re a whiskey man, I remember. Let me get one. I’ll relax more with one… then we can discuss… how I’m to repay you.’

There was no feasible escape. The guard was standing just outside the boat and Will wouldn’t be able to get past him without being thoroughly hauled back onto the boat and into the bed. He knew this. They both did. Emmett nodded his head as Will walked back through the door.

He found a bottle of whiskey and two glasses and pulled the baggie of pills Gabe had sourced for him. He’d already crushed the pills before he left home, but he mixed them into the drink, stirring until the powder disappeared. The whiskey would be strong enough to burn away any aftertaste, he was certain.

He was nervous as he walked back into the room. Emmett would smell it on him, but that didn’t matter. It would only be mistaken for nerves about betraying Hannibal. Every tangled nerve that flared up in his body would be of use, would only add to the portrayal until the moment he broke it.

‘Don’t look so scared, Will. You offered yourself to me. You flung yourself at me at every opportunity.’

‘No, I didn’t,’ Will said, taking a large sip of his whiskey and watching Emmett do the same. Good. ‘I said I’d do whatever it takes to help my children. I didn’t think… I didn’t realise you meant *this*. Please.’

Emmett scoffed before taking another sip. ‘There’s no need to be so coy. This is nothing new for your kind.’

‘And I’m not the only one?’

‘Of course not. You’re all so easily led astray. It’s why I petition so strongly to keep you under the rule of your alphas. You’re not—’

‘You think we’re all a bunch of whores, don’t you?’

‘Has your behaviour proved anything to suggest otherwise? Hannibal hasn’t kept his eye on you at all, has he?’ A thick hand curled over Will’s thigh, nails biting down over the fabric. The touch sizzled, or felt like it did in his head. He only just about kept the snarl from his lips.

‘What are you going to do?’

‘Make love to you.’ Emmett had been aroused before Will’s arrival and beta Viagra, while poisonous to some alphas, was also incredibly fast acting. This wouldn’t take long.

‘I bet I’m not the only one,’ Will said, loud enough for his recording to pick up. ‘Tell me the truth.’

‘Will, you naïve little thing. I’m a councilman. I help run this city. People ask me for favours all the time but you can’t trust them to follow through in helping me out in return unless I give them a little something to worry about.’

‘Sounds like extortion.’

‘You’ve flirted with me from the start. Maybe you couldn’t help yourself, but it is far too late to back out now. Blame that bitch of a daughter and her lying tongue, but don’t blame me for succumbing to my own needs, or you for going with what is so natural for your kind.’

Will’s face remained passive, sipping his whiskey and noticing a slight tug between Emmett’s brow, his hand cupping his pants. He swallowed it down, glass almost drained, probably to burn away the pain that was spreading in his groin.

‘Will it hurt?’ Will asked, dropping his shoulders down when he felt thick fingers curl over the lapels of his jacket. Will had a knife on his hip, one in his pocket. The weight of them against his body was anchoring against any anxiety stirring. He turned in Emmett’s grasp until their eyes locked.

‘We’ll take it slow. I think forgiveness should stem from the mouth, no? Yours is so pretty.’

‘You want me to blow you because I asked for help?’ Will told himself to calm down. Don’t make it so obvious you’re wanting a verbal confession. Emmett, through arousal and now sharp-pain, was making it rather easy.

‘That is a rather crude way of putting it, yes. We have an arrangement. I would rather not tell Hannibal that his omega came to me for help rather than him. Especially when he has only just put his teeth in your neck. An embarrassment for him. Maybe you’re just hungry for another knot. Sounds like you’ve toured quite a few.’

‘I don’t want to do this,’ Will whispered, just loud enough for the recording. Made himself sound scared. ‘Please don’t make me.’

‘There’s really no need for coyness. Get down on your knees, Will. Show me how thankful you are, otherwise I must tell Hannibal. I’ll have to tell everyone until I have him *on side.’*

Emmett was tenting the front of his pants as Will adjusted himself into a crouch, but he could see the discomfort on his face. Hands stroked through his hair, and he wanted to pull away. Not like Hannibal’s long, precise fingers. His stomach burned, and he hated he was going through with this, putting himself out there as obvious bait even as he rubbed his jaw against the coarse fabric of Emmett’s thigh, trying not to gag at the scent of him. He forced himself to look up so that their eyes connected.

‘Is something the matter?’ Will asked, taking notice of Emmett’s face, and how it had paled and clamped up in pain. He dropped the terrified look on his face and stared plainly, his hand hovering over Emmett’s crotch, pressing down over the cloth, where he could feel his erection burning through the fabric. The man flinched at the touch.

‘What have you—’ Emmett froze, words stilling as he looked down at the drink in his hand, mostly drained. He winced, even as fury flooded his face. ‘What did you spike me with?’

‘You know I wanted to kill you.’ Will ignored the question, leaning up over Emmett, his lips to his ear. He smelled disgusting, the touch of him was foul, and all Will could feel in his head was the idea that this wasn’t his alpha, not his man. ‘I wanted to kill you, but Hannibal wouldn’t let me.’

He stood up, listening to the whines of the pained man on the bed. He was pulling open his belt, yanking apart his slacks to stare at his cock, relieving the pressure. Will stared down at it; thick, red and painful. Will could imagine the heat of the tight, sensitive skin. Wondered whether it would be more or less painful to come.

‘You underestimated me. You thought I was just some sad little omega drip, huh? Fucking pathetic.’ Will leaned down and grabbed at Emmett’s erection, twisting it in his hand, laughing when the man cried out. ‘I’m going to tell you what’s going to happen. You’re going to resign with immediate effect. Dealing with personal issues. Which… I think you’re going to have. Be some time before you’re knotting again. Be some time before you’ll be getting this *thing* up at all.’

‘You little bitch,’ Emmett stuttered between clenched teeth.

‘Yeah.’ Will wouldn’t dispute it, but he could feel blood pumping, adrenaline kicking up tenfold to how it had been with John in the parking lot. ‘You’ve got a bad case of priapism. They’ll probably need to stick a needle in it to drain the fluid. We have your files. We have your confession about what exactly you planned to do with me. I’m willing to go on record about it. Don’t think I won’t.’

Emmett howled at the painful throbbing in his groin, but agreed. ‘I’ll resign. Fuck, alright. Hannibal will pay for this, you little cunt.’

‘Hannibal can afford to pay,’ Will said, ‘You can’t.’

He pulled his phone out and took a photo. Emmett spread on the bed, sweaty and pale, pants open and hands covering his rigid, inflamed cock. ‘You’re fucking done. Your career is done. Your associations are done. Behave yourself. Remember I have evidence. *All* the evidence. If you breathe a word of this to anyone, I’ll release it all.’

Will looked at the sprawled mess of a man and heard the slow ambling of the guard, finally rushing in as Emmett’s cries increased. Will stepped aside, staring down at the scene as the alpha lumbered into view and took sight of his client crumpled on the bed. Will could end it. He had two knives, he could finish the job the way he used to. But humiliation was fun, allowing Emmett to suffer with the consequences, letting Hannibal rise and further his power would be even more rewarding. The guard fumbled for the gun in his holster, but Will just laughed at him, stopping him short.

‘I’d call an ambulance if I was you, before his dick is ruined for life.’

All he wanted to do was find Hannibal. That wasn't any different from how it had been a year ago. High on adrenaline and the general need to fuck. His blood was rushing, his hands shaking, although not in nerves, but unable to contain the rush of blood hurtling through his veins. As he stumbled to the car, he fell clumsily inside, hands immediately pulling the wires tucked into his shirt until they came free.

'That was fun,' he said, resting against the headrest and closing his eyes. In his chest, his heart thumped over and over.

'You really don't care what people say about you, do you?' Anthony said, but Will only laughed. He listened as the engine switched on and Anthony smoothly pulled out of the parking lot.

'The payoff is usually worth whatever shit they spew at me—' His phone rang in his pocket, cutting off his comment, and he pulled it out, half expecting Hannibal as he answered.

'Mom, where the fuck is everyone?' Gabe's voice rang through his ears, a little slurred like he'd been drinking. 'I'm at home but there's no one here.'

There was something in his tone, an edge of insecurity that burned Will's chest at the thought of his kid feeling abandoned.

'We've been doing a thing. A work thing,' Will said, cautiously.

'The thing that involved the Viagra? I got some weird-ass text from Lecter telling me I wasn't allowed to deal drugs to you anymore,' Gabe laughed. 'Grandad needs to chill.'

'Don't call him that.' He heard Anthony laugh from beside him, Gabe's loud voice carrying through the speaker. 'Everyone is in Wolf Trap right now. I can come by and pick you up. I can explain. If you want to be a part of it.'

'Of course I do,' Gabe said, his words a flood of endorphins that left Will almost light-headed. 'You kill a dude tonight or what?'

'Not tonight, no.' He's here now, Will told himself as he hung up and apprehension creeped in. There was no protecting him, not in the way he ought to be, and this life here was so much better than the one his father and grandparents had given him. It would be enough.

An hour later and they were all sitting around the kitchen table. Will had his baby daughter in his lap, held close to his chest as Hannibal took an emergency phone call from the mayor. His tone was serious, but Will could see the glint in his eyes. It pleased him, his hand pressing warmly over Will's shoulder as he wandered past.

'You can verify everyone in these photos?' Freddie was saying, almost buzzing with excitement.

‘I’ve a list of everyone that will go on record here,’ Antony said. ‘I can corroborate a portion. A few stories. This pile-’ he pointed to a smaller selection of print outs, ‘want to be left out of it.’

‘This is a lot,’ Freddie whistled through her lips. They’d have to monitor her, but this would keep her preoccupied for some time. At least until they could decide what was to be done with her if Abigail insisted on keeping her around. ‘Are you sure it’s watertight?’

‘We’ve got lawyers,’ Will said, eyes on Tobias who was also talking on the phone to someone else. His house had never been this full before. He rocked Greta and looked over to Abigail and Gabe huddled by the back door, both their heads tilted down as they watched something on Gabe’s phone with smiling faces.

‘Emmett thinks that you’re keeping quiet unless he tries to wriggle his way out. I think he’s going to be furious once he realises you sold him out,’ Anthony said, bringing Will back to reality with a long lazy grin over his face. ‘I for one can’t wait.’

‘Let them know what he tried to do to Hannibal’s omega bitch,’ Will shrugged, his head spinning as the sheer amount of people got to him. He wanted them all to go away so he could be alone with his family, however large it had got in the last year.

‘Press are going to have a field day with this, it will probably go national,’ Freddie said, eyes on Anthony. She looked mightily pleased with herself, imagining her name credited with every mention of the story. Probably, Will thought, picturing what outfit she would wear for her very first TV appearance.

‘I’d rather Will’s name wasn’t released.’ Hannibal’s voice was the only thing that made Will realise he was no longer on the phone. His hand was heavy at Will’s nape as he took a seat beside him, but Will watched his eyes fixed firm on Freddie. She nodded her head in agreement. Will sagged in the chair, listening to Hannibal take control, and not caring one bit now that his own anger had been fed.

Later, Will once they were back home and Will had seen Gabe to bed, argued with Abigail and fed Greta for the final time, he would crawl into the bed beside Hannibal. He might make love to him, or maybe he’d be too tired and curl up against him instead. Tomorrow the news would break, and tomorrow Hannibal would call a meeting once he was back from his emergency council meeting. Will would take his place beside him, no longer the bloodhound, or the bitch that lived in the house next door. He tried to picture the faces of the men like Tier, in the picture for so long but sidelined at long last; his own children - Abigail and Gabe waiting in the shadows until they were ready to take their place alongside them.

‘What are you thinking about?’ Hannibal whispered, lips close to Will’s ear. The room was still buzzing with the atmosphere. Freddie had pulled her laptop out to start writing, Abigail was leaning over Will to pull the sleeping baby from his arms as Gabe slipped outside for a cigarette.

‘Nothing,’ Will said with a smile, nodding his head toward Hannibal’s cell that kicked to life again, buzzing on the table. ‘It can wait.’

Chapter End Notes

That’s it! Thanks for reading. See you in like a month or so when I’ve finished my next thing I guess lol

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